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The Collected Poems of John Drinkwater

GOLD
HELVELLYN
CUMBERLAND
RYDAL
WINDERMERE
DOVE COTTAGE
WESTMORLAND
LANCASHIRE
N
BEACONS
NAAMAN'S MAID
W
E
DAVID AND JONATHAN
S
RAMESES
IMMORTALITY
DERBY DALES
DALE
SAMPLERS
LINCOLN
MILLER
LIVERPOOL
CHESHIRE
WORCESTER
BIRMINGHAM
FECKENHAM
MOONLIT
LADY STREET
THE BROKEN GATE
GRAFTON
LONDON
APPLES
GLOUCESTER
THE COTSWOLD HILLS
R THAMES
MW WILLOW
WILTSHIRE
CHANNEL
BRISTOL
TWO SHIPS
BRISTOL
DORSET
BERKS
HANTS
KENT
WINCHELSEA
SOMERSET
WINDERBORNE CAME
The English Channel
Alwyn R. 1923
The Collected Poems of JOHN DRINKWATER

The Collected Poems of John Drinkwater Volume II 1917-1922

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The Midlands

Black in the summer night my Cotswold hill
  Aslant my window sleeps, beneath a sky
Deep as the bedded violets that fill
  March woods with dusky passion. As I lie
Abed between cool walls I watch the host
  Of the slow stars lit over Gloucester plain,
And drowsily the habit of these most
  Beloved of English lands moves in my brain,
While silence holds dominion of the dark,
Save when the foxes from the spinneys bark.

I see the valleys in their morning mist
  Wreathed under limpid hills in moving light,
Happy with many a yeoman melodist :
  I see the little roads of twinkling white
Busy with fieldward teams and market gear
  Of rosy men, cloth-gaitered, who can tell
The many-minded changes of the year,
  Who know why crops and kine fare ill or well ;
I see the sun persuade the mist away,
Till town and stead are shining to the day.

I see the wagons move along the rows
  Of ripe and summer-breathing clover-flower,
I see the lissom husbandman who knows
  Deep in his heart the beauty of his power,
As, lithely pitched, the full-heaped fork bids on
  The harvest home. I hear the rickyard fill
With gossip as in generations gone,
  While wagon follows wagon from the hill.
I think how, when our seasons all are sealed,
Shall come the unchanging harvest from the field.

I see the barns and comely manors planned
  By men who somehow moved in comely thought,
Who, with a simple shippon to their hand,
  As men upon some godlike business wrought;
I see the little cottages that keep
  Their beauty still where since Plantagenet
Have come the shepherds happily to sleep,
  Finding the loaves and cups of cider set;
I see the twisted shepherds, brown and old,
Driving at dusk their glimmering sheep to fold.

And now the valleys that upon the sun
  Broke from their opal veils, are veiled again,

And the last light upon the wolds is done,
And silence falls on flocks and fields and men;
And black upon the night I watch my hill,
And the stars shine, and there an owly wing
Brushes the night, and all again is still,
And, from this land of worship that I sing,
I turn to sleep, content that from my sires
I draw the blood of England's midmost shires.

Plough

The snows are come in early state,
And love shall now go desolate
If we should keep too close a gate.

Over the woods a splendour falls
Of death, and grey are the Gloucester walls,
And grey the skies for burials.

But secret in the falling snow
I see the patient ploughman go,
And watch the quiet furrows grow.

Inscription for a War Memorial Fountain

They nothing feared whose names I celebrate.
Greater than death they died; and their estate
Is here on Cotswold comradely to live
Upon your lips in every draught I give.

Cotswold Love

Blue skies are over Cotswold
And April snows go by,
The lasses turn their ribbons
For April's in the sky,
And April is the season
When Sabbath girls are dressed,
From Rodboro' to Campden,
In all their silken best.

An ankle is a marvel
When first the buds are brown,
And not a lass but knows it
From Stow to Gloucester town.
And not a girl goes walking
Along the Cotswold lanes
But knows men's eyes in April
Are quicker than their brains.

It's little that it matters,
So long as you're alive,
If you're eighteen in April,
Or rising sixty-five,

When April comes to Amberley
With skies of April blue,
And Cotswold girls are briding
With slyly tilted shoe.

Riches

The riches of the world have been
  Magnificently told;
The caravans of Sheba's queen,
  The chests of Tyrian gold,
And Alexander's dusky spears,
  And Solomon his mines,
Jerusalems of laurelled seers,
  And gospels of divines.

But these are ghosts and foreign things
  When meadow grass is mown
On Cotswold, where my summer sings
  Her cottage of grey stone,
And no theologies have made
  So quick a Paradise
As this my Cotswold corner laid
  Under the Cotswold skies.

Legacy

When twice a hundred years have gone
  Across my Cotswold eaves,
And still the woods of Sapperton
  Make summer of green leaves,
Come then and sing what song you will,
  You lovers of new time,
But sometimes on my Cotswold hill
  Renew my Cotswold rhyme.

Make me a temple on this ground
  Not built of mortal stone,
But sprung from unforgotten sound
  Of song my blood has known,
So shall my tale not be of dust
  Chilled in a common urn,
While proudly through your younger lust
  My testament shall burn.

Cottage Song

Morning and night I bring
Clear water from the spring,
And through the lyric noon
I hear the larks in tune,
And when the shadows fall
There's providence for all.

My garden is alight
With currants red and white;
And my blue curtains peep
On starry courses deep,
When down her silver tides
The moon on Cotswold rides.

My path of paven grey
Is thoroughfare all day
For fellowship, till time
Bids us with candles climb
The little whitewashed stair
Above my lavender.

The Cotswold Farmers

Sometimes the ghosts forgotten go
  Along the hill-top way,
And with long scythes of silver mow
  Meadows of moonlit hay,
Until the cocks of Cotswold crow
  The coming of the day.

There's Tony Turkletob who died
  When he could drink no more,
And Uncle Heritage, the pride
  Of eighteen-twenty-four,
And Ebenezer Barleytide,
  And others half a score.

They fold in phantom pens, and plough
  Furrows without a share,
And one will milk a faery cow,
  And one will stare and stare,
And whistle ghostly tunes that now
  Are not sung anywhere.

The moon goes down on Oakridge lea,
The other world's astir,
The Cotswold farmers silently
Go back to sepulchre,
The sleeping watchdogs wake, and see
No ghostly harvester.

Old Crow

The bird in the corn
  Is a marvellous crow.
He was laid and was born
  In the season of snow;
And he chants his old catches
Like a ghost under hatches.

He comes from the shades
  Of his wood very early,
And works in the blades
  Of the wheat and the barley,
And he's happy, although
He's a grumbleton crow.

The larks have devices
  For sunny delight,
And the sheep in their fleeces
  Are woolly and white;
But these things are the scorn
Of the bird in the corn.

And morning goes by,
  And still he is there,
Till a rose in the sky
  Calls him back to his lair
In the boughs where the gloom
Is a part of his plume.

But the boy in the lane
  With his gun, by and by,
To the heart of the grain
  Will narrowly spy,
And the twilight will come,
And no crow will fly home.

Moonlit Apples

At the top of the house the apples are laid in rows,
And the skylight lets the moonlight in, and those
Apples are deep-sea apples of green. There goes
A cloud on the moon in the autumn night.

A mouse in the wainscot scratches, and scratches,
and then
There is no sound at the top of the house of men
Or mice; and the cloud is blown, and the moon
again
Dapples the apples with deep-sea light.

They are lying in rows there, under the gloomy
beams;
On the sagging floor; they gather the silver streams
Out of the moon, those moonlit apples of dreams,
And quiet is the steep stair under.

In the corridors under there is nothing but sleep.
And stiller than ever on orchard boughs they keep
Tryst with the moon, and deep is the silence, deep
On moon-washed apples of wonder.

Out of the Moon

Merely the moonlight
Piercing the boughs of my may-tree,
Falling upon my ferns;
Only the night
Touching my ferns with silver bloom
Of sea-flowers here in the sleeping city—
And suddenly the imagination burns
With knowledge of many a dark significant doom
Out of antiquity,
Sung to hushed halls by troubadours
Who knew the ways of the heart because they had
seen
The moonlight washing the garden's deeper green
To silver flowers,
Falling with tidings out of the moon, as now
It falls on the ferns under my may-tree bough.

Elizabeth Ann

This is the tale of Elizabeth Ann,
Who went away with her fancy man.

Ann was a girl who hadn't a gown
As fine as the ladies who walk the town.

All day long from seven to six
Ann was polishing candlesticks,

For Bishops and crapulous Millionaires
To buy for their altars or bed-chambers.

And youth in a year and a year will pass,
But there's never an end of polishing brass.

All day long from seven to six—
Seventy thousand candlesticks.

So frail and lewd Elizabeth Ann
Went away with her fancy man.

You Bishops and crapulous Millionaires,
Give her your charity, give her your prayers.

Reverie

Here in the unfrequented noon,
In the green hermitage of June,
While overhead a rustling wing
Minds me of birds that do not sing
Until the cooler eve rewakes
The service of melodious brakes,
And thoughts are lonely rangers, here,
In shelter of the primrose year,
I curiously meditate
Our brief and variable state.

I think how many are alive
Who better in the grave would thrive,
If some so long a sleep might give
Better instruction how to live;
I think what splendours had been said
By darlings now untimely dead
Had death been wise in choice of these,
And made exchange of obsequies.

I think what loss to government
It is that good men are content,

Well knowing that an evil will
Is folly-stricken too, and still
Itself considers only wise
For all rebukes and surgeries,
That evil men should raise their pride
To place and fortune undefied.

I think how daily we beguile
Our brains, that yet a little while
And all our congregated schemes
And our perplexity of dreams,
Shall come to whole and perfect state.
I think, however long the date
Of life may be, at last the sun
Shall pass upon campaigns undone.

I look upon the world and see
A world colonial to me,
Whereof I am the architect,
And principal and intellect,
A world whose shape and savour spring
Out of my lone imagining,
A world whose nature is subdued
For ever to my instant mood,

And only beautiful can be
Because of beauty is in me.
And then I know that every mind
Among the millions of my kind
Makes earth his own particular
And privately created star,
That earth has thus no single state,
Being every man articulate.
Till thought has no horizon then
I try to think how many men
There are to make an earth apart
In symbol of the urgent heart,
For there are forty in my street,
And seven hundred more in Greet,
And families at Luton Hoo,
And there are men in China, too.

And what immensity is this
That is but a parenthesis
Set in a little human thought,
Before the body comes to naught.
There at the bottom of the copse
I see a field of turnip tops,

I see the cropping cattle pass
There in another field, of grass,
And fields and fields, with seven towns,
A river, and a flight of downs,
Steeples for all religious men,
Ten thousand trees, and orchards ten,
A mighty span that curves away
Into blue beauty, and I lay
All this as quartered on a sphere
Hung huge in space, a thing of fear
Vast as the circle of the sky
Completed to the astonished eye;
And then I think that all I see,
Whereof I frame immensity
Globed for amazement, is no more
Than a shire's corner, and that four
Great shires being ten times multiplied
Are small on the Atlantic tide
As an emerald on a silver bowl . . .
And the Atlantic to the whole
Sweep of this tributary star
That is our earth is but . . . and far
Through dreadful space the outmeasured mind
Seeks to conceive the unconfined.

I think of Time. How, when his wing
Composes all our quarrelling
In some green corner where May leaves
Are loud with blackbirds on all eves,
And all the dust that was our bones
Is underneath memorial stones,
Then shall old jealousies, while we
Lie side by side most quietly,
Be but oblivion's fools, and still
When curious pilgrims ask—"What skill
Had these that from oblivion saves?"—
My song shall sing above our graves.

I think how men of gentle mind,
And friendly will, and honest kind,
Deny their nature and appear
Fellows of jealousy and fear;
Having single faith, and natural wit
To measure truth and cherish it,
Yet, strangely, when they build in thought,
Twisting the honesty that wrought
In the straight motion of the heart,
Into its feigning counterpart
That is the brain's betrayal of

The simple purposes of love ;
And what yet sorrier decline
Is theirs when, eager to confine
No more within the silent brain
Its habit, thought seeks birth again
In speech, as honesty has done
In thought ; then even what had won
From heart to brain fades and is lost
In this pretended pentecost,
This their forlorn captivity
To speech, who have not learnt to be
Lords of the word, nor kept among
The sterner climates of the tongue . . .
So truth is in their hearts, and then
Falls to confusion in the brain,
And, fading through this mid-eclipse,
It perishes upon the lips.

I think how year by year I still
Find working in my dauntless will
Sudden timidities that are
Merely the echo of some far
Forgotten tyrannies that came
To youth's bewilderment and shame ;

That yet a magisterial gown,
Being worn by one of no renown
And half a generation less
In years than I, can dispossess
Something my circumspecter mood
Of excellence and quietude,
And if a Bishop speaks to me
I tremble with propriety.

I think how strange it is that he
Who goes most comradely with me
In beauty's worship, takes delight
In shows that to my eager sight
Are shadows and unmanifest,
While beauty's favour and behest
To me in motion are revealed
That is against his vision sealed;
Yet is our hearts' necessity
Not twofold, but a common plea
That chaos come to continence,
Whereto the arch-intelligence
Richly in divers voices makes
Its answer for our several sakes.

I see the disinherited
And long procession of the dead,
Who have in generations gone
Held fugitive dominion
Of this same primrose pasturage
That is my momentary wage.
I see two lovers move along
These shadowed silences of song,
With spring in blossom at their feet
More incommunicably sweet
To their hearts' more magnificence,
Than to the common courts of sense,
Till joy his tardy closure tells
With coming of the curfew bells.
I see the knights of spur and sword
Crossing the little woodland ford,
Riding in ghostly cavalcade
On some unchronicled crusade.
I see the silent hunter go
In cloth of yeoman green, with bow
Strung, and a quiver of grey wings.
I see the little herd who brings
His cattle homeward, while his sire
Makes bivouac in Warwickshire
This night, the liege and loyal man

Of Cavalier or Puritan.
And as they pass, the nameless dead
Unsung, uncelebrate, and sped
Upon an unremembered hour
As any twelvemonth fallen flower,
I think how strangely yet they live
For all their days were fugitive.

I think how soon we too shall be
A story with our ancestry.

I think what miracle has been
That you whose love among this green
Delightful solitude is still
The stay and substance of my will,
The dear custodian of my song,
My thrifty counsellor and strong,
Should take the time of all time's tide
That was my season, to abide
On earth also; that we should be
Charted across eternity
To one elect and happy day
Of yellow primroses in May.

The clock is calling five o'clock,
And Nonesopretty brings her flock
To fold, and Tom comes back from town
With hose and ribbons worth a crown,
And duly at The Old King's Head
They gather now to daily bread,
And I no more may meditate
Our brief and variable state.

To Alice Meynell

I too have known my mutinies,
Played with improvident desires,
Gone indolently vain as these
Whose lips from undistinguished choirs
Mock at the music of our sires.

I too have erred in thought. In hours
When needy life forbade me bring
To song the brain's unravished powers,
Then had it been a temperate thing
Loosely to pluck an easy string.

Yet thought has been, poor profligate,
Sin's period. Through dear and long
Obedience I learn to hate
Unhappy lethargies that wrong
The larger loyalties of song.

And you upon your slender reed,
Most exquisitely tuned, have made

For every singing heart a creed.
And I have heard; and I have played
My lonely music unafraid,

Knowing that still a friendly few,
Turning aside from turbulence,
Cherish the difficult phrase, the due
Bridals of disembodied sense
With the new word's magnificence.

Penances

These are my happy penances. To make
Beauty without a covenant; to take
Measure of time only because I know
That in death's market-place I still shall owe
Service to beauty that shall not be done;
To know that beauty's doctrine is begun
And makes a close in sacrifice; to find
In beauty's courts the unappeasable mind.

Habitation

High up in the sky there, now, you know,
In this May twilight, our cottage is asleep,
Tenantless, and no creature there to go
Near it but Mrs Fry's fat cows, and sheep
Dove-coloured, as is Cotswold. No one hears
Under that cherry-tree the night-jars yet,
The windows are uncurtained ; on the stairs
Silence is but by tip-toe silence met.
All doors are fast there. It is a dwelling put by
From use for a little, or long, up there in the sky.

Empty ; a walled-in silence, in this twilight of
May—
A home for lovers, and friendly withdrawing, and
sleep,
With none to love there, nor laugh, nor climb from
the day
To the candles and linen. . . . Yet in the silence
creep,
This minute, I know, little ghosts, little virtuous
lives,
Breathing upon that still, insensible place,

Touching the latches, sorting the napkins and knives,
And such for the comfort of being, and bowls for the grace,
That roses will brim ; they are creeping from that room to this,
One room, and two, till the four are visited . . . they,
Little ghosts, little lives, are our thoughts in this twilight of May,
Signs that even the curious man would miss,
Of travelling lovers to Cotswold, signs of an hour,
Very soon, when up from the valley in June will ride
Lovers by Lynch to Oakridge up in the wide
Bow of the hill, to a garden of lavender flower. . . .

The doors are locked ; no foot falls ; the hearths are dumb—
But we are there—we are waiting ourselves who come.

Blackbird

He comes on chosen evenings,
My blackbird bountiful, and sings
Over the gardens of the town
Just at the hour the sun goes down.
His flight across the chimneys thick,
By some divine arithmetic,
Comes to his customary stack,
And couches there his plumage black,
And there he lifts his yellow bill,
Kindled against the sunset, till
These suburbs are like Dymock woods
Where music has her solitudes,
And while he mocks the winter's wrong
Rapt on his pinnacle of song,
Figured above our garden plots
Those are celestial chimney-pots.

Southampton Bells

I

Long ago some builder thrust
Heavenward in Southampton town
His spire and beamed his bells,
Largely conceiving from the dust
That pinnacle for ringing down
Orisons and Noëls.

In his imagination rang,
Through generations challenging
His peal on simple men,
Who, as the heart within him sang,
In daily townfaring should sing
By year and year again.

II

Now often to their ringing go
The bellmen with lean Time at heel,
Intent on daily cares ;
The bells ring high, the bells ring low,
The ringers ring the builder's peal
Of tidings unawares.

And all the bells might well be dumb
For any quickening in the street
Of customary ears ;
And so at last proud builders come
With dreams and virtues to defeat
Among the clouding years.

III

Now, waiting on Southampton sea
For exile, through the silver night
I hear Noël ! Noël !
Through generations down to me
Your challenge, builder, comes aright,
Bell by obedient bell.

You wake an hour with me ; then wide
Though be the lapses of your sleep
You yet shall wake again ;
And thus, old builder, on the tide
Of immortality you keep
Your way from brain to brain.

Mystery

Think not that mystery has place
In the obscure and veilèd face,
Or when the midnight watches are
Uncompanied of moon or star,
Or where the fields and forests lie
Enfolded from the loving eye
By fogs rebellious to the sun,
Or when the poet's rhymes are spun
From dreams that even in his own
Imagining are half-unknown.

These are not mystery, but mere
Conditions that deny the clear
Reality that lies behind
The weak, unspeculative mind,
Behind contagions of the air
And screens of beauty everywhere,
The brooding and tormented sky,
The hesitation of an eye.

Look rather when the landscapes glow
Through crystal distances as though

The forty shires of England spread
Into one vision harvested,
Or when the moonlit waters lie
In silver cold lucidity ;
Those countenances search that bear
Witness to very character,
And listen to the song that weighs
A life's adventure in a phrase—
These are the founts of wonder, these
The plainer miracles to please
The brain that reads the world aright ;
Here is the mystery of light.

Mrs Willow

Mrs Thomas Willow seems very glum.
Her life, perhaps, is very lonely and hum-drum,
Digging up potatoes, cleaning out the weeds,
Doing the little for a lone woman's needs.
Who was her husband ? How long ago ?
What does she wonder ? What does she know ?
Why does she listen over the wall,
Morning and noon-time and twilight and all,
As though unforgotten were some footfall ?

"Good morning, Mrs Willow." "Good morning, sir,"
Is all the conversation I can get from her.
And her path-stones are white as lilies of the wood,
And she washes this and that till she must be very good.
She sends no letters, and no one calls,
And she doesn't go whispering beyond her walls ;
Nothing in her garden is secret, I think—
That's all sun-bright with foxglove and pink.
And she doesn't hover round old cupboards and shelves

As old people do who have buried themselves ;
She has no late lamps, and she digs all day
And polishes and plants in a common way,
But glum she is, and she listens now and then
For a footfall, a footfall, a footfall again,
And whether it's hope, or whether it's dread,
Or a poor old fancy in her head,
I shall never be told ; it will never be said.

Constancy

The shadows that companion me
From chronicles and poetry
More constant and substantial are
Than these my men familiar,
Who draw with me uncertain breath
A little while this side of death ;
For you, my friend, may fail to keep
To-morrow's tryst, so darkly deep
The motions mutable that give
To flesh its brief prerogative,
And in the pleasant hours we make
Together for devotion's sake,
Always the testament I see
That is our twin mortality.
But those from the recorded page
Keep an eternal pilgrimage.
They steadfastly inhabit here
With no mortality to fear,
And my communion with them
Ails not in the mind's stratagem
Against the sudden blow, the date
That once must fall unfortunate.

They fret not nor persuade, and when
These graduates I entertain,
I grieve not that I too must fall
As you, my friend, to funeral,
But rather find example there
That, when my boughs of time are bare,
And nothing more the body's chance
Governs my careful circumstance,
I shall, upon that later birth,
Walk in immortal fields of earth.

Buds

The raining hour is done,
And, threaded on the bough,
The may-buds in the sun
Are shining emeralds now.

As transitory these
As things of April will,
Yet, trembling in the trees,
Is briefer beauty still.

For, flowering from the sky
Upon an April day,
Are silver buds that lie
Amid the buds of may.

The April emeralds now,
While thrushes fill the lane,
Are linked along the bough
With silver buds of rain.

And, straightly though to earth
The buds of silver slip,
The green buds keep the mirth
Of that companionship.

Crocuses

(TO E. H. C.)

Desires,
Little determined desires,
Gripped by the mould,
Moving so hardly among
The earth, of whose heart they were bred,
That is old ; it is old,
Not gracious to little desires such as these,
But apter for work on the bases of trees,
Whose branches are hung
Overhead,
Very mightily, there overhead.

Through the summer they stirred,
They strove to the bulbs after May,
Until harvest and song of the bird
Went together away ;
And ever till coming of snows
They worked in the mould, for undaunted were
those
Swift little determined desires, in the earth

Without sign, any day,
Ever shaping to marvels of birth,
Far away.

And we went
Without heed
On our way,
Never knowing what virtue was spent,
Day by day,
By those little desires that were gallant to breed
Such beauty as fortitude may.
Not once in our mind
Was that corner of earth under trees,
Very mighty and tall,
As we travelled the roads and the seas,
And gathered the wage of our kind,
And were laggard or trim to the call
Of the duties that lengthen the hours
Into seasons that flourish and fall.

And blind,
In the womb of the flowers,
Unresting they wrought,
In the bulbs, in the depth of the year,

Buried far from our thought ;
Till one day, when the thrushes were clear
In their note it was spring—and they know—
Unheeding we came into sight
Of that corner forgotten, and lo,
They had won through the meshes of mould,
And treasuries lay in the light,
Of ivory, purple, and gold.

Reality

It is strange how we travel the wide world over,
And see great churches and foreign streets,
And armies afoot and kings of wonder,
And deeds a-doing to fill the sheets
That grave historians will pen
To ferment the brains of simple men.

And all the time the heart remembers
The quiet habit of one far place,
The drawings and books, the turn of a passage,
The glance of a dear familiar face,
And there is the true cosmopolis,
While the thronging world a phantom is.

Shows

Just as with men and women met
In daily usage of the town,
I treat with you, and this forget
In charity, and that set down
Where memory your honour keeps.

And you approach me every day
With an indifferent judgment, count
My virtues from my frailties, weigh
Coldly the motives at the fount
Whence welling every action leaps.

And this the world sees ; this it knows
For all the marriage of our wit.
And thus the world divines the shows
Of service, while the pearl of it
Glows in unfathomable deeps.

Character

If one should tell you that in such a spring
The hawthorn boughs into the blackbird's nest
Poured poison, or that once at harvesting
The ears were stony, from so manifest
Slander of proven faith in tree and corn
You would turn unheeding, knowing him forsworn.

Yet now, when one whose life has never known
Corruption, as you know: whose days have been
As daily tidings in your heart of lone
And gentle courage, suffers the word unclean
Of envious tongues, doubting you dare not cry—
"I have been this man's familiar, and you lie."

Rupert Brooke

(DIED APRIL 23, 1915)

To-DAY I have talked with old Euripides ;
  Shakespeare this morning sang for my content
Of chimney-sweepers ; through the Carian trees
  Comes beating still the nightingales' lament ;
The Tabard ales to-day are freshly brewed ;
  Wordsworth is with me, mounting Loughrigg
    Fell ;
All timeless deaths in Lycid are renewed,
  And basils blossom yet for Isabel.

Quick thoughts are these ; they do not pass ; they
    gave
  Only to death such little, casual things
As are the noteless levies of the grave,—
  Sad flesh, weak verse, and idle marketings.
So my mortality for yours complains,
While our immortal fellowship remains.

On Reading Francis Ledwidge's Last Songs

At April's end, when blossoms break
To birth upon my apple tree,
I know the certain year will take
Full harvest of this infancy.

At April's end, when comes the dear
Occasion of your valley tune,
I know your beauty's arc is here,
A little ghostly morning moon.

Yet are these fosterlings of rhyme
As fortunately born to spend
Happy conspiracies with time
As apple flowers at April's end.

Charge to the Players

THE TROJAN WOMEN, BIRMINGHAM REPERTORY THEATRE, APRIL 1918

Shades, that our town-fellows have come
To hear rewake for Christendom
This cleansing of a Pagan wrong
In flowing tides of tragic song,—
You shadows that the living call
To walk again the Trojan wall,—
You lips and countenance renewed
Of an immortal fortitude,—
Know that, among the silent rows
Of these our daily town-fellows,
Watching the shades with these who bring
But mortal ears to this you sing,
There somewhere sits the Greek who made
This gift of song, himself a shade.

Nemesis

While honour droops, your argument
Brings you the profits of your trade
And nothing mars your foul content
Where truth's a shade.

And we, sad wisdom, are but dumb
Herds of the waste, until again
The angels of persuasion come
To govern men.

If you should prosper for a year,
Or if uncalendared the date,
Truth as a patient gospeller
Will wait, and wait.

While we in speculation brood
Your evil tongues are on the mount,
Till every poor unlessoned mood
Comes to account.

The Life of John Heritage

Born in the Cotswolds in eighteen-forty or so,
Bred on a hill-top that seemed the most of the world
Until he travelled the valleys, and found what a wonder
Of leagues from Gloucester lay to Stroud or Ciceter,
John Heritage was a tiler. He split the stone,
After the frosts, and learnt the laying of tiles,
And was famous about the shire. And he was friendly
With Cotswold nature, hearing the hidden rooks
In Golden Vale, and the thin bleat of goats,
And the rattling harness of Trilly's teams at plough,
And Richard Parker's scythe for many years,
As he went upon his tiling; and the great landmarks,
As loops of the Severn seen from Bisley Hill,
Were his familiars, something of his religion.

And he prospered, as men do. His little wage
Yet left a little over his wedded needs,
And here a cottage he bought, and there another,

About the Cotswolds, built of the royallest stone
That's quarried in England, until he could think
of age
With an easy mind ; and an acre of land was his
Where at hay-harvest he worked a little from tiling,
Making his rick maturely or damning the wind
That scattered the swathes beyond his fork's con-
trolling.
And he trotted ajog to the town on market
Thursdays,
Driving a stout succession of good black geldings,
That cropped his acre some twenty years apiece.
And he was an honest neighbour ; and so he grew
old,
And five strong sons, grizzled and middle-aged,
Carried him down the hill, and on a stone
The mason cut—" John Heritage, who died,
Fearing the Lord, at the age of seventy-six."

And I know that some of us shatter our hearts on
earth,
With mightier aims than ever John Heritage knew,
And think such things as never the tiler thought,
Because of our pride and our eagerness of mind . . .

But a life complete is a great nobility,
And there's a wisdom biding in Cotswold stone,
While we in our furious intellectual travel
Fall in with strange foot-fellows on the road.

Thomas Yarnton of Tarlton

One of those old men fearing no man,
Two hundred broods his eaves have known
Since they cut on a Sapperton churchyard stone—
"Thomas Yarnton of Tarlton, Yeoman."

At dusk you can hear the yeomen calling
The cattle still to Sapperton stalls,
And still the stroke of the woodman falls
As Thomas of Tarlton heard it falling.

I walked these meadows in seventeen-hundred,
Seed of his loins, a dream that stirred
Beyond the shape of a yeoman's word,
So faint that but unawares he wondered.

And now, from the weeds of his tomb uncomely,
I travel again the tracks he made,
And walks at my side the yeoman shade
Of Thomas Yarnton of Tarlton dumbly.

*Written in Winterborne Came Church**

(TO MRS THOMAS HARDY)

I DO not use to listen well
  At sermon time,
I'd rather hear the plainest rhyme
  Than tales the parsons tell;

The homespun of experience
  They will not wear,
But walk a transcendental air
  In dusty rags of sense.

But humbly in your little church
  Alone I watch;
Old rector, lift again the latch,
  Here is a heart to search.

Come, with a simple word and wise
  Quicken my brain,

* William Barnes, 1801-1886, Rector.

And while upon the painted pane
The painted butterflies

Beat in the early April beams,
You shall instruct
My spirit in the knowledge plucked
From your still Dorset dreams.

Your word shall strive with no obscure
Debated text,
Your vision being unperplexed,
Your loving purpose pure.

I know you'll speak of April flowers,
Or lambs in pen,
Or happy-hearted maids and men
Weaving their April hours.

Or rising to your thought will come,
For lessoning,
Those lovers of an older spring,
That now in tombs are dumb.

And brooding in your theme shall be,
  Half said, half heard,
The presage of a poet's word
  To mock mortality.

. . . . . .

The years are on your grave the while,
  And yet, almost,
I think to see your surpliced ghost
  Stand hesitant in the aisle,

Find me sole congregation there,
  Assess my mood,
Know mine a kindred solitude,
  And climb the pulpit-stair.

The Fugitive

Beauty has come to make no longer stay
Than the bright buds of may
In May-time do.

Beauty is with us for one hour, one hour,
Life is so brief a flower;
Thoughts are so few.

Thoughts are so few with mastery to give
Shape to these fugitive
Dear brevities,

That even in its hour beauty is blind,
Because the shallow mind
Not sees, not sees.

And in the mind of man only can be
Alert prosperity
For beauty brief.

So, what can be but little comes to less
Upon the wilderness
Of unbelief.

And beauty that has but an hour to spend
With you for friend,
Goes outcast by.

But know, but know—for all she is outcast—
It is not she at last,
But you that die.

Trial

Beauty of old and beauty yet to be,
Stripped of occasion, have security;
This hour it is searches the judgment through,
When masks of beauty walk with beauty too.

At an Inn

We are talkative proud, and assured, and self-sufficient,
The quick of the earth this day;
This inn is ours, and its courtyard, and English history,
And the Post Office up the way.

The stars in their changes, and heavenly speculation,
The habits of birds and flowers,
And character bred of poverty and riches,
All these are ours.

The world is ours, and these its themes and its substance,
And of these we are free men and wise;
Among them all we move in possession and judgment,
For a day, till it dies.

But in eighteen-hundred-and-fifty, who were the tenants,
Sure and deliberate as we?
They knew us not in the time of their ascension,
Their self-sufficiency.

And in nineteen-hundred-and-fifty this inn shall
flourish,
And history still be told,
And the heat of blood shall thrive, and speculation,
When we are cold.

Moonrise

WHERE are you going, you pretty riders ?—
To the moon's rising, the rising of death's moon,
Where the waters move not, and birds are still and songless,
Soon, very soon.

Where are you faring to, you proud Hectors ?
Through battle, out of battle, under the grass,
Dust behind your hoof-beats rises, and into dust,
Clouded, you pass.

I'm a pretty rider, I'm a proud Hector,
I as you a little am pretty and proud ;
I with you am riding, riding to the moonrise,
So sing we loud—

" Out beyond the dust lies mystery of moonrise,
We go to chiller learning than is bred in the sun,
Hectors, and riders, and a simple singer,
Riding as one."

Of Iles Farm

(TO MY FRIENDS THERE)

HERE is a theme for graver tones
  Than now I sing.
It shelters you; it is a pole
  For thought upon your travelling;
Here dreams established are in stones,
  To mark and bring
Irresolutions to control
  From truant wing.

But not of these my argument.
  I celebrate
Your hearth, your comfortable speech
  Of young years and late,
Your courtesies that are content
  To sow and wait,
For these as planets are to teach
  My travel to your gate.

Provocations

I AM no merry monger when
I see the slatterns of the town:
I hate to think of docile men
Whose angers all are driven down;
For sluts make joy a thing obscene,
And in contempt is nothing clean.

I like to see the ladies walk
With heels to set their chins atilt:
I like to hear the clergy talk
Of other clergy's people's guilt;
For happy is the amorous eye,
And indignation clears the sky.

Instruction

I HAVE a place in a little garden,
That laurel-leaf and fern
Keep a cool place though fires of summer
All the green grasses burn.
Little cool winds creep there about
When winds all else are dead,
And tired limbs there find gentle keeping,
And humours of sloth are shed.

So do your songs come always to me,
Poets of age and age,
Clear and cool as rivers of wind
Threading my hermitage,
Stilling my mind from tribulation
Of life half-seen, half-heard,
With images made in the brain's quietness,
And the leaping of a word.

Responsibility

You ploughmen at the gate,
  All that you are for me
Is of my mind create,
  And in my brain to be
A figure newly won
From the world's confusion.

And if you are of grace,
  That's honesty for me,
And if of evil face,
  Recorded then shall be
Dishonour that I saw
Not beauty, but the flaw.

History

Sometimes, when walls and occupation seem
A prison merely, a dark barrier
Between me everywhere
And life, or the larger province of the mind,
As dreams confined,
As the trouble of a dream,
I seek to make again a life long gone,
To be
My mind's approach and consolation,
To give it form's lucidity,
Resilient form, as porcelain pieces thrown
In buried China by a wrist unknown,
Or mirrored brigs upon Fowey sea.

Then to my memory comes nothing great
Of purpose, or debate,
Or perfect end,
Pomp, nor love's rapture, nor heroic hours to spend—
But most, and strangely, for long and so much have I seen,

Comes back an afternoon
Of a June
Sunday at Elsfield, that is up on a green
Hill, and there,
Through a little farm parlour door,
A floor
Of red tiles and blue,
And the air
Sweet with the hot June sun cascading through
The vine-leaves under the glass, and a scarlet fume
Of geranium flower, and soft and yellow bloom
Of musk, and stains of scarlet and yellow glass.

Such are the things remain
Quietly, and for ever, in the brain,
And the things that they choose for history-making
pass.

The Talent

When we as ghosts inhabit history,
In reputation happy or forlorn,
Uncounted then shall all our quarrels be
As any dusty calendar outworn.

"They, with what wit they might, immortal dress
Devised for instant beauty ere they died."
So shall we live, but shall not live by less;
O brief and bitter hearts, be pacified.

Dear and Incomparable

Dear and incomparable
  Is that love to me
Flowing out of the woodlands,
  Out of the sea;
Out of the firmament breathing
  Between pasture and sky,
For no reward is cherished here
  To reckon by.

It is not of my earning,
  Nor forfeit I can
This love that flows upon
  The poverty of man,
Though faithless and unkind
  I sleep and forget,
This love that asks no wage of me
  Waits my waking yet.

Of such is the love, dear,
  That you fold me in,
It knows no governance
  Of virtue or sin;

From nothing of my achieving
  Shall it enrichment take,
And the glooms of my unworthiness
  It will not forsake.

The Wood

I WALKED a nut-wood's gloom. And overhead
A pigeon's wing beat on the hidden boughs,
And shrews upon shy tunnelling woke thin
Late winter leaves with trickling sound. Across
My narrow path I saw the carrier ants
Burdened with little pieces of bright straw.
These things I heard and saw, with senses fine
For all the little traffic of the wood,
While everywhere, above me, underfoot,
And haunting every avenue of leaves,
Was mystery, unresting, taciturn.

. . . . . .

And haunting the lucidities of life
That are my daily beauty, moves a theme,
Beating along my undiscovered mind.

At an Earthworks

Ringed high with turf the arena lies,
The neighbouring world unseen, unheard,
Here are but unhorizoned skies,
And on the skies a passing bird,

The conies and a wandering sheep,
The castings of the chambered mole,—
These, and the haunted years that keep
Lost agonies of blood and soul.

They say that in the midnight moon
The ghostly legions gather yet,
And hear a ghostly timbrel-tune,
And see a ghostly combat met.

These are but yeoman's tales. And here
No marvel on the midnight falls,
But starlight marvellously clear,
Being girdled in these shadowy walls.

Yet now strange glooms of ancestry
  Creep on me through this morning light,
Some spectral self is seeking me . . .
  I will not parley with the night.

The Patriot

Scarce is my life more dear to me,
Brief tutor of oblivion,
Than fields below the rookery
That comfortably looks upon
The little street of Piddington.

I never think of Avon's meadows,
Ryton woods or Rydal mere,
Or moon-tide moulding Cotswold shadows,
But I know that half the fear
Of death's indifference is here.

I love my land. No heart can know
The patriot's mystery, until
It aches as mine for woods ablow
In Gloucestershire with daffodil,
Or Bicester brakes that violets fill.

No man can tell what passion surges
For the house of his nativity
In the patriot's blood, until he purges

His grosser mood of jealousy,
And comes to meditate with me

Of gifts of earth that stamp his brain
As mine the pools of Ludlow mill,
The hazels fencing Trilly's Lane,
And Forty Acres under Brill,
The ferry under Elsfield hill.

These are what England is to me,
Not empire, nor the name of her
Ranging from pole to tropic sea.
These are the soil in which I bear
All that I have of character.

That men my fellows near and far
May live in like communion,
Is all I pray; all pastures are
The best beloved beneath the sun;
I have my own; I envy none.

Deer

Shy in their herding dwell the fallow deer.
They are spirits of wild sense. Nobody near
Comes upon their pastures. There a life they live,
Of sufficient beauty, phantom, fugitive,
Treading as in jungles free leopards do,
Printless as evelight, instant as dew.
The great kine are patient, and home-coming sheep
Know our bidding. The fallow deer keep
Delicate and far their counsels wild,
Never to be folded reconciled
To the spoiling hand as the poor flocks are;
Lightfoot, and swift, and unfamiliar,
These you may not hinder, unconfined
Beautiful flocks of the mind.

On a Lake

Sweet in the rushes
The reed-singers make
A music that hushes
The life of the lake;
The leaves are dumb,
And the tides are still,
And no calls come
From the flocks on the hill.

Forgotten now
Are nightingales,
And on his bough
The linnet fails,—
Midway the mere
My mirrored boat
Shall rest and hear
A slenderer note.

Though, heart, you measure
But one proud rhyme,
You build a treasure
Confounding time—

Sweet in the rushes
The reed-singers make
A music that hushes
The life of the lake.

Harvest Moon

"Hush!" was my whisper
At the stair-top
When the waggoners were down below
Home from the barley-crop.
Through the high window
Looked the harvest moon,
While the waggoners sang
A harvest tune,—
"Hush!" was my whisper when
Marjory stept
Down from her attic-room,
A true-love-adept.

"Fill a can, fill a can,"
Waggoners of heart were they,
"Harvest-home, harvest-home,
Barleycorn is home to-day." . . .
"Marjory, hush now—
Harvest—you hear?"—
Red was the moon's rose
On the full year,

The cobwebs shook, so well
Did the waggoners sing—
"Hush!"—there was beauty at
That harvesting.

Passage

When you deliberate the page
Of Alexander's pilgrimage,
Or say—"It is three years, or ten,
Since Easter slew Connolly's men,"
Or prudently to judgment come
Of Antony or Absalom,
And think how duly are designed
Case and instruction for the mind,
Remember then that also we,
In a moon's course, are history.

The Common Lot

When youth and summertime are gone,
And age puts quiet garlands on,
And in the speculative eye
The fires of emulation die,
But as to-day our time shall be
Trembling upon eternity,
While, still inconstant in debate,
We shall on revelation wait,
And age as youth will daily plan
The sailing of the caravan.

To One I Love

As I walked along the passage, in the night, beyond
the stairs,
In the dark,
I was afraid,
Suddenly,
As will happen you know, my dear, it will often
happen.
I knew the walls at my side,
Knew the drawings hanging there, the order of
their placing,
And the door where my bed lay beyond,
And the window on the landing—
There was even a little ray of moonlight through
it—
All was known, familiar, my comfortable home;
And yet I was afraid,
Suddenly,
In the dark, like a child, of nothing,
Of vastness, of eternity, of the queer pains of
thought,
Such as used to trouble me when I heard,
When I was little, the people talk

On Sundays of " As it was in the Beginning,
Is Now, and Ever Shall Be. . . ."
I am thirty-six years old,
And folk are friendly to me,
And there are no ghosts that should have reason to haunt me,
And I have tempted no magical happenings
By forsaking the clear noons of thought
For the wizardries that the credulous take
To be golden roads to revelation.
I knew all was simplicity there,
Without conspiracy, without antagonism,
And yet I was afraid,
Suddenly,
A child, in the dark, forlorn. . . .
And then, as suddenly,
I was aware of a profound, a miraculous understanding,
Knowledge that comes to a man
But once or twice, as a bird's note
In the still depth of the night
Striking upon the silence . . .
I stood at the door, and there
Was mellow candle-light,
And companionship, and comfort,

And I knew
That it was even so,
That it must be even so
With death.
I knew
That no harm could have touched me out of my fear,
Because I had no grudge against anything,
Because I had desired
In the darkness, when fear came,
Love only, and pity, and fellowship,
And it would have been a thing monstrous,
Something defying nature
And all the simple universal fitness
For any force there to have come evilly
Upon me, who had no evil in my heart,
But only trust, and tenderness
For every presence about me in the air,
For the very shadow about me,
Being a little child for no one's envy.
And I knew that God
Must understand that we go
To death as little children,
Desiring love so simply, and love's defence,
And that he would be a barren God, without humour,

To cheat so little, so wistful, a desire,
That he created
In us, in our childishness . . .
And I may never again be sure of this,
But there, for a moment,
In the candle-light,
Standing at the door,
I knew.

Harvesting

Pale sheaves of oats, pocked by untimely rain,
Under October skies,
Teased and forlorn,
Ungathered lie where still the tardy wain
Comes not to seal
The seasons of the corn,
From prime to June, with running barns of grain.

Now time with me is at the middle year,
The register of youth
Is now to sing . . .
My thoughts are ripe, my moods are in full ear ;
That they should fail
Of harvesting,
Uncarried on cold fields, is all my fear.

Thrift

(TO F. L.)

No beauty beauty overthrows
But every joy its season knows,
And all enchanted hours prepare
Enchantment for to-morrow's wear.

Who in the just society
That walks with him this hour can see
But shadows of another bliss
Loses both that delight and this.

Grieve not the parting day, for soon
The nightingales will sing the moon
Climbing the track that now the sun
Leaves when the songs of day are done.

And grieve not when her beauty pales,
And silence keeps the nightingales,
For that eclipse again will bring
The sun with all his birds to sing.

The Toll-gate House

The toll-gate's gone, but still stands lone,
In the dip of the hill, the house of stone,
And over the roof in the branching pine
The great owl sits in the white moonshine.
An old man lives, and lonely, there,
His windows yet on the cross-roads stare,
And on Michaelmas night in all the years
A galloping far and faint he hears . . .
His casement open wide he flings
With " Who goes there ? " and a lantern swings . . .
But never more in the dim moonbeam
Than a cloak and a plume and the silver gleam
Of passing spurs in the night can he see,
For the toll-gate's gone and the road is free.

A Lesson to my Ghost

Shall it be said that the wind's gone over
The hill this night, and no ghost there ?
Not the shape of an old-time lover
Pacing the old road, the high road there ?
By the peacock tree, the tree that spreads its branches
Like a proud peacock's tail (so my lady says),
Under a cloudy sky, while the moon launches
Scattered beams of light along the dark silences ?
I will be a ghost there, though I yet am breathing,
A living presence still in tight cottage walls,
Sitting by the fire whose smoke goes wreathing
Over fields and farmyards and farmyard stalls.
As a player going to rehearse his faring,
I will send my ghost there before my bones are dust,
Bid it learn betimes the sock it shall be wearing
When it bids the clay good-bye, as all ghosts must.
Hush, then ; upstairs sleep my lady and her mother ;
The cat curls the night away, and will not stir ;
Beams of lamp and beech-log cross one another,
No wind walks in the garden there.

Go, my ghost, it calls you, the high road, the winding,
Written by the moonlight on the sleeping hill;
I will watch the ashes, you go finding
The way you shall walk for generations still.
The window-latch is firm, the curtain does not tremble,
The wet grass bends not under your tread,
Brushing you shake not the rain from the bramble,
They hear no gate who lie abed.
Nodding I stare at the hearth, but I see you,
My half-wit travels with you the road;
There shall be your kingdom when death shall free you,
When body's wit is neither leash nor goad.
Past the peacock branches proudly gliding,
Your own ghost now, I know, I know,
You look to the moon on the hill-top riding,
The mares in the meadow sleep as you go.
Your eyes that are dark yet great for divining
Brood on the valleys of wood and plough,
And you stand where the silver flower is shining
Of cherry against the black holly bough.
Rehearse, O rehearse, as you pass by the hedgerows,
Remembrance of all that was my bright will,

That so my grave of whispers and echoes
May rest for the ghost that is yet on the hill.
The primroses burn and the cowslips cover
The starry meadows as heaven is clad ;
Learn them all, O ghost, as a lover,
So shall your coming again be glad.
The inn-sign hangs in the windless watches,
You pass the shadowy piles of stone
Under the walls where the hawthorn catches
Shapes from the moon that are not its own.
Wander, wander down by the cresses,
Over the crest of the hill, between
The brown lych-gate and the cider-presses,
Past the well and across the green.
Heed me, my ghost, my heir. To-morrow,
Or soon, my body to ash must fall.
Heed me, ghost, and I shall not sorrow—
Learn this beauty, O learn it all.
Night goes on, the beech-log's ended,
Half-wit's drowsy, and doctrine done,—
Ghost, come home from the road ; befriended
My moon shall be when I leave the sun.

Absence

This was a fair land
For the young soul to find,
Whose orchards are renewed
And blossom in the mind.
Far wave, far heaven, far hill,
I dream of England still.

And now this year's primrose
Shines under last year's leaves.
The swallow searches out
Accustomed eaves ;
Far wave, far heaven, far hill,
I dream of England still.

Though fresh devices come,
Yet is my custom true ;
There my vocation is,
That was my cradle too.
Far wave, far heaven, far hill,
I dream of England still.

A New Ballad of Charity

God knows how time shall use me yet,
For I with brain too wise have known
A world corrupt, nor can forget
Some evil there as still my own—
Poor griefs henceforth may be alone
My calendars to reckon by,
But in my empires overthrown
I'll keep a heart of charity.

Wronged, and wrong doing, still I'll pray
For gentleness to all my kind,
So soon to-morrow strikes to-day,
And then a day when all is blind,
And the vainglory of the mind
Passes, and all together lie
Where nothing is but hope to find
The excellence of charity.

There is no virtue in us all
But keeps with sin for housefellow,
And, when the blade of death shall fall,
Starveling and naked must we go ;

And none of all shall warrant show
To save him from damnation by,
But only this—" Dear God, you owe
All that I dealt of charity."

And, O you English, let us make
Our hearts a little wise to-day,
And learn for best religion's sake
To walk awhile the homeward way.
Too long we cast an alien clay
And towards a far and fading sky
Too long a pilgrimage we pay—
For there is not our charity.

Since I am English bred, I'll keep
A year and year my journey still
By little Langdale tarns asleep,
Or, with my rhymes on Bredon Hill,
I will go shepherding until
The shires from Severn down to Wye
Are figured messages to fill
My quietness with charity.

And where the yellow-hammer sings
From bramble blooms in Water Lane

I'll make a world of sweeter things
  Than are in blind ambition's brain,
And there I will forget the pain
  Of envy and the fears defy
That in love's bitterness complain,—
  Because I walk with charity.

The primroses of Bagley Wood,
  Old apple trees at Piddington,
Helvellyn in his cloudy hood—
  Shall I not write them one by one,
The true, the best, occasion
  Of all my faith before I die ?
For other gospellers are none
  To teach me holy charity.

The Recorder

It was not dawn ; in the full day
I drowsed my wits in sleep,
And let the rich world steal away,
Without a song to keep.

Then from a dripping timber-stack,
Where the wild thistle grew,
Spreading his scarlet plumes and black,
Again the loud cock crew.

The Wood-Carver

(TO W. G. S.)

Out of his ash did he conceive her mood,
Repentant Eve, her sad face bowed among
Cascades of hair, her limbs, that had been dewed
Lately in Eden where the apples hung,
Now carved for ever in a lovely sorrow,
All love, all grief, all kindred with the flowers
That now flush wood and meadow, and to-morrow
Are ghosts, are tears among remembered hours.
O little Eve, bowed in your loss for ever,
Bowed bosom and clasped hands and hidden face,
We are your sorrow too, and master never
The loss of spring and the wild April grace—
We love, and sin, and lose, as you to be
An image carved in beauty from the tree.

The Dying Philosopher to his Fiddler

Come, fiddler, play one tune before I die.
Philosophy is barren, and I lie
Untouched now by the plagues of all the schools,
And only silly fiddlers are not fools.

Bring then your bow, and on the strings let be,
In this last hour, merely the melody
Of waves and leaves and footfalls hazardous,
Where crafty logic shall not keep with us.

The patient fields of knowledge did I sow;
I have done with knowledge—for I nothing know.
Wisdom and folly set their faces hence,
And in their eyes a twin-intelligence.

Only your notes may quick again the keen
Tree-shadows cut upon the paddock's green,
The pools where mirrored branches are at rest,
The heron lifting to her windy nest.

And these are things that know not argument ;
Come, fiddler, play ; philosophy is spent.
Out of my thought the chiding doctors slip,
And you are now the only scholarship.

The Flame

Myself I do but find
  An ashen mind,
While others greeting me
  Are flames, I see.
Yet they, alone, lament
  Flames that are spent,
Remembering with shame
  My crystal flame . . .
Hereafter then I'll be
  A flame to me.

The Garden

Stone walls, dear trees, worn paths of every day,
Because you have lived so cleanly in my mind
Something of me for ever in you shall stay,
When I the smaller acre yet shall find.
When noon is bright I shall be with your flowers,
With you the snows of winter I shall wear,
And when, enchanted in the midnight hours,
You are a silver lake, I shall be there.

And none shall know, or few; yet, knowing not,
The stranger here shall with your spirit take
Into his heart a kinship unforgot
That still you tell in numbers for my sake,
And in your mute occasion then shall be
Some whispered word that once you learnt of me.

Hereafter

One evening, by some hearth, I know not when,
A stranger to my song shall come to read
What faring was my lot through times and men,
How I was proud, how sorry, with what heed
I was glad of women, and the stars, and corn
Swelling upon my windy Cotswold height,
What miracles I counted in the morn,
And how I was defeated at the night.
And he shall make some story, as I make
Of men who sang as Marvell and as Donne,
And he shall quick his wisdom for my sake,
And put the plumes of celebration on,
And tell how, as of old, the clouded brain
Of man in song was a bright heaven again.

Votive

O MOON, swung there immeasurably far,
Yet only in the pear-tree top, how then
Shall we body in thought the beauty that you are—
Your wizardry upon the souls of men ?

Hush ! Let us say it is the tender light
That falls in silver circumstance and red
Dimly upon the regions of the night,
And saying this how little then is said.

Why should this mute enchantment thus possess
Our hearts in adoration—how should come
This worship of a ghost of quietness,
Of spectral tides that move not and are dumb ?

Why do we worship ? We are but strays of will,
While the sun takes us. Folded now and far
From the day's light, we are minds possessed and
still,
Vision and peace. We worship what we are.

Two Ships

The morning shone with April on
A little silver ship at sea,
With happy sails, and bearing bales
To Panama from Tripoli,
    And fortunately bound
    She went without a sound.

Into the night, forlornly bright
There came a little ship of gold,
Without a name, she passed in flame,
With cargoes never to be told,
    Out of a port unknown,
    Swinging to death alone.

Portia's Housekeeping

We are thrifty of joy in this our modern house;
We probe the springs of joy with uneasy rods,
And shadow the worm in every thrilling bud.
Virtue we know will walk in seedy rags
Of knavery when the better humour fails;
And we know the good man's shadow of desire.

It was not so with Portia. She was simple,
Plain for clear yes or no and good or bad.
Bassanio at Belmont in the evening,
Walking the terrace with Antonio,
Was a good man with his friend, and that was all,
Save that his lips were young and masterful.
She had no fine philosophy of sin;
You lied, and that was bad. You gave your word,
And, when time came, redeemed it. A treasure kept
At another's cost was ashes in your hand.
She liked her roses red, her lilies white,
And counted punctual hours in guests a virtue.
Sometimes she thought of a Jew and a young doctor
Standing before the majesty of Venice,

And smiled, without approval, then again
To sow the asters or feed guinea-fowl.
Gratiano, finding ever new Nerissas
Among her maids, she told not to be tedious,
And Gratiano said she was growing dull.
She liked the verse Lorenzo took to writing
And made some tunes herself upon the lute
To fit a little moonlight sequence. When
Launcelot Gobbo stole a goose at Christmas,
She did not say he was an honest fellow,
But rated him and almost sent him off;
He didn't brag about it to his fellows.
She had two children, and said two were enough,
And loved them. She believed there was a God
With an impatient ear for casuistry.
Bassanio had no regrets, but some
Agreed with Gratiano. I do not know.
In Belmont was a lady richly left?

Night Music

(TO B. V. J.)

ENCHANTED as those days in Caliban's isle,
A music from the night falls on my hill,
  And variously played.
In the hushed moonrise many sounds there are,
Inaudible but to the moods of prayer,
  Into one music made.

Over the foothills from the valley comes
The lowing of some straggler from the herd,
  Roaming in pastures deep.
A sheep-dog's challenge through the dark is met
By the ewe-mothers and their lambs that now
  Are muffled flocks of sleep.

Sweeping across the fern twin measures go,
Towards Worcester one, and Hereford, where weave,
  Glooming, a pair of jars.
Faintly, afar, a brown owl speaks the night,
And hears high up, from out these hill-top pines,
  His mate among the stars.

And, under all, the wind about the gorse
Creeps, or as fire rushes, and burns up
  All sound into one song.
And in the night it flows about my grief,
Healing a little, as on Setebos
  Was eased that older wrong.

So in my heart beauty with beauty strives,
And good slays good. O spirit of wisdom, run,
  As the wise wind to-night,
Through me, and make my crazy tunes all one;
Upon the trouble of my blindness bring
  Light, and for ever light.

In the Valley

Let none devout forgive my sin
Who have not sinned as I;
The soul immaculate within
Has not to measure by
My sorrowing husbandry.

The dark, the error, of my days
Shall be consoled by none
That have not in forbidden ways
Wandered as I have done
With faces from the sun.

Princes of virtue, keep your skill
Of pardon for your peers;
Frail with the frail I travel still
Along uncertain years—
Forbear your holy tears.

One hour in black Gethsemane
I walked with him alone.
He sees, he knows, he touches me—
How shall it then be known
To you, O hearts of stone?

Malediction

Thrush, across the twilight
Here in the abbey close,
Pouring from your lilac-bough
Note on pebbled note,
Why do you sing so,
Making your song so bright,
Swelling to a throbbing curve
That brave little throat ?

Soon, but a season brief,
The lice among your feathers,
Stiff-winged and aimless-eyed,
With song dead you shall fall ;
Refuse of some clotted ditch,
Seeking no more berries,—
Why with lyric numbers now
Do you the twilight call ?

Proud in your tawny plumes
Mottled in devising,
Singing as though never sang
Bird in close till now—

Sharp are the javelins
Of death that are seeking,
Seeking even simple birds
On a lilac-bough.

Crushed, forlorn, a frozen thing,
For no more nesting,
For no more speckled eggs
In pattered cup of clay,
Soon your song shall come to this,
You who make the twilight yours,
And echoes of the abbey,
At the end of day.

In the song I hear it,
The thud of a poor feathered death,
In the swelling throat I see
The splintering of song—
What demon then has worked in me
To tease my brain to bitterness—
In me who have loved bird and tree
So long, so long ?

Until I come to charity,
Until I find peace again,

My curse upon the fiend or god
That will not let me hear
A bird in song upon the bough,
But, hovering about the notes,
There chimes the maniac beating
Of black-winged fear.

Spectral

What will the years tell?
Hush! If it would but speak—
That shadow athwart the stream,
In the gloom of a dream;

Could my brain but spell
The thought in the brain of that weak
Old ghost that hides in the gloom,
Over there, of the chestnut bloom.

I sit in the broad June light
On the open bank of the river,
In the summer of manhood, young;
And over the water bright
Is a lair that is overhung
With coned pink blooms that quiver
And droop till the water's breast
Is of petal and leaf caressed.

And the June sky glares on my prime—
But there in the gloom, with Time,
Huddled, with Time on its back,
Is a shadow that is my wrack.

Yes, it is I in the lair,
Peering and watching me there.

Under the chestnut bloom
My old age hides in the gloom.

And the years to be have been,
Could I spell the lore of that brain.
But the river flows between,
Over the weeds of pain,
Over the snares of death,
Maybe, should I leap to hold,
With myself grown old,
Council there in the gloom
Under the chestnut bloom.

And so, with instruction none,
I go, and leave it there,
My ghost with Time in its lair,
And the things that must yet be done
Tear at my heart unknown,
And the years have tongues of stone
With no syllable to make
For consolation's sake.

But peradventure yet
I shall return
To dare the weeds of death,
And plunge through the coned pink bloom,
And cry on that spectre set
In its silent ring of gloom,
And slay my youth to learn
The thing that my old age saith.

The Cry

Dear life, be merciful and kind,
Lend me your hand, for I am blind,
Lend me your wit, for mine too soon
Inhabits with the spectral moon,
Prepare your still intelligence
To watch beside my ailing sense.

Life, I have made my pilgrimage
All as you bade, and, wage by wage,
Your service seemed but well to me.
Now gentle in persuasion be,
When after you I fall and bleed,
And hear not where your footfalls lead.

My song no tardy messenger
Has been of any word that there
Dwelt from your charge for witnessing,
Let me not be an outcast thing,
Dear life, this weather, from your fold,
With a great heart untimely old.

In faith to you have laboured long
My blood, my purposes, my song.
In faith to you my hope is dumb,
To this poor waste of darkness come.
O life, forsake me not, who lie
Broken upon your Calvary.

Who Were Before Me

Long time in some forgotten churchyard earth of
Warwickshire,
My fathers in their generations lie beyond desire,
And nothing breaks the rest, I know, of John
Drinkwater now,
Who left in sixteen-seventy his roan team at plough.

And James, son of John, is there, a mighty plough-
man too,
Skilled he was at thatching and the barleycorn brew,
And he had a heart-load of sorrow in his day,
But ten score of years ago he put it away.

Then Thomas came, and played a fiddle cut of
mellow wood,
And broke his heart, they say, for love that never
came to good . . .
A hundred winter peals and more have rung above
his bed—
O, poor eternal grief, so long, so lightly, comforted.

And in the gentle yesterday these were but glimmering tombs,
Or tales to tell on fireside eves of legendary dooms ;
I being life while they were none, what had their dust to bring
But cold intelligence of death upon my tides of Spring ?

Now grief is in my shadow, and it seems well enough
To be there with my fathers, where neither fear nor love
Can touch me more, nor spite of men, nor my own teasing blame,
While the slow mosses weave an end of my forgotten name.

The Years

When I was young and twenty
I'ld run a many mile,
And when I came to thirty
I'ld sit and rest awhile,
And now that I am thirty-five
I am the sleepiest man alive.

But maybe when I'm forty
I'll shake my legs again,
And walk from then till fifty
With young and striding men,
And hillward go in sixty's wear
To see how yet the counties fare.

When I am old and eighty,
All treasons will be done
Of love and silly bitterness;
And I shall watch the sun
Go out, and little heed the fear
That smote upon my middle-year.

So twenty comes to eighty
By many a stony track,
And times I have for merchandise
But sorrows in my pack.
But youth foretold them not, and yet
Age will but count them to forget.

So though I come from twenty
To be at thirty-five,
Beset by fears and fancies,
The sleepiest man alive,
Some birthday yet I'll rise and keep
A prouder soul before I sleep.

Before I sleep at eighty,
Never again to know
The hill-tops and the counties
And striding men below,
And furious fevers fade away
To song, and into grass my clay.

To and Fro About the City

SHAKESPEARE is dust, and will not come
To question from his Avon tomb,
And Socrates and Shelley keep
An Attic and Italian sleep.

They will not see us, nor again
Shall indignation light the brain
Where Lincoln on his woodland height
Tells out the spring and winter night.

They see not. But, O Christians, who
Throng Holborn and Fifth Avenue,
May you not meet, in spite of death,
A traveller from Nazareth ?

Vocation

This be my pilgrimage and goal,
  Daily to march and find
The secret phrases of the soul,
  The evangels of the mind.

While easy tongues are lightly heard,
  Let me with them be great
Who still upon the perfect word
  As heavenly fowlers wait.

In taverns none will I be seen
  But can my dæmon teach
My cloudy thought to wash all clean
  In the bright sun of speech.

Fairford Nightingales

The nightingales at Fairford sing
As though it were a common thing
To make the day melodious
With tones that use to visit us
Only when thrush and blackbird take
Their sleep nor know the moon's awake.

These nightingales they sing at noon,
Not lyric lone, but threading June
With songs of many nightingales,
Till the meridian summer pales,
And here by day that spectral will
Is spending its enchantment still.

Nor shyly in far woodland bowers
But walled among the garden flowers,
The Fairford nightingales are free,
That so the fabled melody
Is from the haunted groves of Thrace
Falling on Fairford market-place.

O nightingales that leave the night
To join the melodists of light,
And leave your coppiced gloom to dare
The fellowship forsaken there,
Fresh hours, fresh leaves can dispossess
Nor spoil your music's loneliness.

Beacons

One home together by the fells we knew
And the blue brakes of England in the spring,
And we had sires who also heard the bells
Somewhere along the English meadows. We
Measure one cause, one spirit, and one word,
And in one pilgrim faith have done our part
In the slow world's devising. Some queer grain
Of oak out of our soil moulded alike
The *Mayflower*, the *Revenge*. The East has dreams,
Lotus and temples and the circled fingers,
Building in contemplation. The sun returns
Yet to the South with Mediterranean song,
And Provence bears the old Athenian gift,
And still is heard the praise of troubadours,
Which is for service; from the Siberian fields
A sobbing and a moving in the night,
Where a great lineage communes with the earth,
Till grief is beauty and the wise revelation.
So from the races life inherits well,
Stillness, and flight, and faith. And we the West,
Whose tides from Kent to California move,
Shall we not be the new adventurers?

America, you were in Shakespeare's word,
And Milton's, half a prophecy. You were
An Ironside when Cromwell took the field,
Drake fared for you, and Nelson is your blood.
And England, little fens and pools and hills,
Green friendliness of pastures in the dusk,
White-thorn where thrushes nest, grey thatch and
stone,
What excellence of you was there that day
When an unnoted sail put out to sea
From Plymouth to the England of a dream ?
At Yorktown did your nobler heart lament
Among the lost or beat with Washington ?
And has not Lincoln in your proper tongue
Your chronicle retold of Runnymede ?
Then, pledged upon a happier covenant
Than furnished old crusades, with none to fear
Of arms or treasons, having for our faith
To covet not an acre of the world,
Shall we not be the new adventurers ?
Come—let us get our gospel now by heart—
One man in grief sets a whole world in tears ;
No man is free while one for freedom fears.

England to Czecho-Slovakia

Once—in the day of our meridian song
And young armadas—on your Bohemian hill
An older fame suffered an alien wrong
Where arms again blasphemed a people's will.
And freedom slept among your heroes then,
Sepulchred on White Mountain, till a theme
Of the unforgotten music called again,
And sovranty was where had been a dream.

Fortune, for all our wisdom, we can shape not,
Being free, we yet are kinsmen of the blind,
The snares of our own hearts we can escape not,
Our bravest end is fortitude of mind—
But Masaryk knows, Bohemia knows, that thence
The spirit of man walks in magnificence.

May 1920.

The Man Who Won the War

THE PASSING OF HIS BODY

Whoever sinned in this, it was not he,
While warriors of the tongue defiled our name,
His was no casual service, nor shall be
A casual fame.

To-day let all philosophies be dumb.
And every ardour pause a moment thus,
To say of him, who back from death has come,—
"He died for us."

Not lonely, though unnamed. Battalioned deep
With you are ghostly multitudes, who tell
Nothing, nor claim. Together to your sleep
Pass, and farewell.

November 11th, 1920.

John Keats

Out of the fevers and dark imaginations
That were his day, he would turn to the mirrored
quietness,
The imaged world, ordered from the desires
Of those his fathers whose fevers were as his own,
And there he found the peace of understanding
In Troys and Fairylands and Heaven and Hell.

And thence the brain that was John Keats took
power
To build an imaged world his own, and devise
Shape for the fevers and dark imaginations,
Winnowing, moulding all, till all was beauty.

Now again we are but blind men, darkly
Fingering circumstance, sick men with our fevers,
And his brief time of passion and frustration
Shines over us, an image for our doctrine,
A sorrow shaped, a speculation bodied,
That we the clearlier may behold ourselves,
Because of his bright moons and nightingales.

And thus alone shall be the world's salvation.

Samplers

In praise of love, upon my mind
  Samplers I'll make to be,
As lovers long ago designed
  Emblems of courtesy,
Threading in warm and frosty wools
Their wisdom's calendars and rules.

He errs to think those hands were set
  All spinster-like and cold,
Who spelt a scarlet alphabet,
  And birds of blue and gold,
And made immortal garden-plots
Of daisies and forget-me-nots.

The bodkins wove an even pace,
  Yet these are lyrics too,
Breathing of spectral lawn and lace,
  Old ardours to renew,
For in the corners love would keep
His fold among the little sheep.

So I will samplers make as well,
  Nor shall the colours lack
In shining characters to tell
  Your lovely Zodiac,
And all your kisses there and words
Shall spring again as flowers and birds.

To Waste Not

Under the snow
Are roots to blow
So soon with daffodils,
And buds prepare
The cowslips' wear,
Buried below the hills.

Within the brake
So soon shall wake
The building birds to sing,
And folded now
In every bough
Are bridals of the Spring.

Shall Love be lost
In tardy frost
When other flowers are free?
Or less than birds
Shake happy words
As blossoms from the tree?

O Love, make haste
Or time will waste
The habit of your lute,
Prepare your string
To play the Spring,
Or be for ever mute.

The Bond

O FAR and well my gentleness
Has walked among your coverts green,
With your still wisdom to possess
My weary brain and gather in
My thought from madness, as the bells
Do beggared flocks from stormy fells.

Now mute and careful shall I live
Your constant alien to be ?
Or, as the honest fugitive,
Lend love but sad security ?
O love, be brave, and bid me go
In freedom still your bondfellow.

Decision

Had we our bodies to provide
With rule for an eternal date
Well should our intellectual pride
Upon the years for witness wait,
Holding our adversary's will
But heresy for time to kill.

And here where but a mood goes by
And we are folded from the sun,
In marriage of the grave to lie,
And every argument is done,
Each burning hour of argument
Is but in wrangling folly spent.

I will no cunning words devise;
Once told, I can but let you be
In your own patient counsel wise
Of my love's simple honesty,
While somewhere is an acre sown
That shall instruct us, bone by bone.

Surety

Love is not dead
We have cherished it too long,
We have planted it too deep,
And we have watered well
The roots and branches spread
In earth and airy song.
Love has a word to keep,
A word to tell.

Yes, that is all.
I know behind the fume
Of this poor difference
Love waits, nor grieves too much,
Till the old voices call,
And sings upon the gloom
Too sure an eloquence
For death to touch.

Too long a date
Has love between us plied
For that long trodden path
To wear in weeds or rain,

Too long in love's debate
Have we been satisfied,
For jealousies of wrath
To blind the brain.

Union

I

Suppose me dead; think of the man you made,
A moment, but as earth, unbreathing more,
His garments folded, and his reckoning paid
Of love, and faith, and fame; then, as before
A chronicle all done, with *finis* writ,
Ask if the man you made had truly been
More worth your pride and daily watching wit
Had fear of you one passage cancelled clean.

Would you not say, serenely gospelled then,
"I taught him faith, I bade his word be said
Fearing no challenge nor reproof of men;
And had the happy courage that I bred
Once brought me chill obedience for wage,
This chronicle had been a poorer page"?

II

For, dear, I can but serve you at the rate
That is my heart's occasion, that is all;
If I deny myself and with you wait,
It is not I, however you may call;

Something of me must go, if I deny,
Though in denial shall be with you still
A body walking and a watchful eye,
The patient service of an impoverished will.

For if the love that loved, and chose, and came
Ever again to you, nor ever found
Estrangement in far absences, nor blame
For pilgrimage to other Edens bound,
Should know one beauty by your will denied,
Thenceforth how should old faith be satisfied ?

III

But when you bid me go as beauty calls,
Knowing that my desire could follow none
But fair vocation, and that intervals
In honest love are still love's errands done,
When you upon my embarkation wait,
And cry, " O Keel ! forth in pursuit of spring,
All Archipelagos to navigate,
You are my ship, and this your voyaging "—

Then nothing lets between your sovran pride
And all my kingdom, nor is poor pretence

That over all my fortunes you preside
When half my levies are rebellious pence;
Then do you govern that your craft began,
A man, and not the shadow of a man.

Against Treason

All you have been you can be in this hour,
My need will be my need for evermore.
Time cannot steal your excellence of power,
Nor stain the love that liveried you before,
If you shall but your wonted honour keep,
And daily meet me with quick truth of old,
And let nor change nor dark alloy nor sleep
Betray your former witness of its mould.

But if in other features you present
The woman that I loved, how should I make
Renewal daily of an old content
I knew for her whose covenant you break?
Though you yourself betrayed your elder pride.
I would not in your treason be allied.

For This Moment

Let me, who am your poet—(nor thereby
Think me less yours that other worlds I sing
Than your sweet universe) now let me try
Persuasion such as in an antique spring
Pan among cowslip meadows might have thus
Found with his shepherd's daughter prosperous:

"O love, why should you ever look beyond
This gladness into past or future time,
Accusing in your mind the heart now fond,
With phantom treason or ungendered crime?
For mortal ever is the lover's kiss
And mocks who claims diviner emphasis.

"But one day and another day shall come
New kisses, love, with each its sovran power
Bidding to-morrow's history be dumb
And yesterday's but a forgotten hour,
Fold up your fears, put your sad fancies by,
Lest in complaint our sweet occasion die.

" Lest in complaint of sad example grow
But barren hours to-morrow from to-day ;
Love lives but by renewal, and can show
Constant succession never ; therefore pay
Proudly the charges of this present need,
Or bid me sound on other shores my reed."

Death and a Lover

DEATH. A LOVER. HIS DEAD MISTRESS ON A BIER

LOVER

Blind, silly Death, although you nothing care
For my despair,
Could you not see my darling was too fair
For earth to lose?

DEATH

The wit, when love comes to so quick a close,
Distempered goes—
No day but earth shall build bright limbs as those,
For me to bruise.

LOVER

Then, though the world is tearless for her sake,
Some pity take
Upon my dark immortal sorrow,—wake
This pretty one.

DEATH

Ten thousand years ago a lover cried,
"Ah, let betide
What may, my grief must ever more abide."
His grief is done.

LOVER

She might have borne me children straight and strong,
To plough the long
Furrows, and make their ploughing in a song
Articulate.

DEATH

Still shall the green blades break upon the spring,
And song shall bring
Her liberty to every captive thing,
Early or late.

LOVER

Though, Death, you govern me in argument,
Still goes unspent
My grief, my grief. How shall I be content,
O King of Fear?

I neither pity nor console. Farewell.
Bearers, the bell
Calls you. Alone his sorrow let him tell.
She will not hear.

The Pledge

When love is bright and whole again,
  I'll sing like the bee's weather,
I'll set my colours up again
  Like the cock-pheasant's feather,
I'll find a note to make me one
With lyric birds that sing the sun.

I'll fill my songs with palmer's buds
  And sprigs of thorn for Whitsunday,
And they shall dance as willow rods,
  And shine with garlands of the may,
I'll be a theme that takes the spring
From bushes where the blackbirds sing.

I'll walk among my sheep again
  And turn my steps to numbers,
When love is bright and whole again
  And fear has gone to slumbers,
With wings again and flowers and stars
To be my coloured calendars.

Nunc Dimittis

I HAVE seen the plover's wing,
And the grey willow bough,
The sandy bubbling spring,
The hawk over the plough,
  And now, instructed so,
  I am content to go.

Songs of the lake and wood
Of water and wind I have heard,
And I have understood
According to Thy word.
  What then is now to learn ?
  Seaward, O soul, return.

Though I shall walk again
Nor spring nor winter field,
Yet surely in my brain
Are spring and winter sealed.
  Earth you have shown me all,
  I am ready for the call.

The Providence

I DO not ask, and yet you give,
You give, and yet without design,—
Only some wonder, fugitive
In you from all the world, is mine.

You do not bid me serve, and still
I am all service for your sake,
And gift by gift my daily will
For me does a new kingdom make.

Covenant

I WOULD no sweeter treasure know
From your dear love than I can give,
And in such peace as you bestow
I pray for you to live.

Star to rejoicing star shall move
And flower on happy flower shall shine,
But all the sorrows of our love,—
Let these be wholly mine.

Yet that is treason. For I bear
No prouder heart than is your own,
And you would scorn the love would share
Delight and grieve alone.

Persuasion

Then I asked: "Does a firm persuasion that a thing is so, make it so?"

He replied: "All Poets believe that it does, and in ages of imagination this firm persuasion removed mountains; but many are not capable of a firm persuasion of anything."

BLAKE'S *Marriage of Heaven and Hell.*

I

AT any moment love unheralded
Comes, and is king. Then as, with a fall
Of frost, the buds upon the hawthorn spread
Are withered in untimely burial,
So love, occasion gone, his crown puts by,
And as a beggar walks unfriended ways,
With but remembered beauty to defy
The frozen sorrows of unsceptred days.
Or in that later travelling he comes
Upon a bleak oblivion, and tells
Himself, again, again, forgotten tombs
Are all now that love was, and blindly spells
His royal state of old a glory cursed,
Saying "I have forgot," and that's the worst.

II

If we should part upon that one embrace,
And set far courses ever, each from each,
With all our treasure but a fading face
And little ghostly syllables of speech,
Should beauty's moment never be renewed,
And moons on moons look out for us in vain,
And each but whisper from a solitude
To hear but echoes of a lonely pain,—
Still in a world that fortune cannot change
Should walk those two that once were you and I,
Those two that once when moon and stars were strange
Poets above us in an April sky,
Heard a voice falling on the midnight sea,
Mute, and for ever, but for you and me.

III

This nature, this great flood of life, this cheat
That uses us as baubles for her coat,
Takes love, that should be nothing but the beat
Of blood for its own beauty, by the throat,
Saying, you are my servant and shall do
My purposes, or utter bitterness
Shall be your wage, and nothing come to you
But stammering tongues that never can confess.
Undaunted then in answer here I cry,
"You wanton, that control the hand of him
Who masquerades as wisdom in a sky
Where holy, holy, sing the cherubim,
I will not pay one penny to your name
Though all my body crumble into shame."

IV

Woman, I once had whimpered at your hand,
Saying that all the wisdom that I sought
Lay in your brain, that you were as the sand
Should cleanse the muddy mirrors of my thought;
I should have read in you the character
Of oracles that quick a thousand lays,
Looked in your eyes, and seen accounted there
Solomons legioned for bewildered praise.
Now have I learnt love as love is. I take
Your hand, and with no inquisition learn
All that your eyes can tell, and that's to make
A little reckoning and brief, then turn
Away, and in my heart I hear a call,
"I love, I love, I love"; and that is all.

V

When all the hungry pain of love I bear,
And in poor lightless thought but burn and burn,
And wit goes hunting wisdom everywhere,
Yet can no word of revelation learn,
When endlessly the scales of yea and nay
In dreadful motion fall and rise and fall,
When all my heart in sorrow I could pay
Until at last were left no tear at all,
Then if with tame or subtle argument
Companions come and draw me to a place
Where words are but the tappings of content,
And life spreads all her garments with a grace,
I curse that ease, and hunger in my heart
Back to my pain and lonely to depart.

VI

Not anything you do can make you mine,
For enterprise with equal charity
In duty as in love elect will shine,
The constant slave of mutability.
Nor can your words for all their honey breath
Outsing the speech of many an older rhyme,
And though my ear deliver them from death
One day or two, it is so little time.
Nor does your beauty in its excellence
Excel a thousand in the daily sun,—
Yet must I put a period to pretence,
And with my logic's catalogue have done,
For act and word and beauty are but keys
To unlock the heart, and you, dear love, are these.

VII

Never the heart of spring had trembled so
As on that day when first in Paradise
We went afoot as novices to know
For the first time what blue was in the skies,
What fresher green than any in the grass,
And how the sap goes beating to the sun,
And tell how on the clocks of beauty pass
Minute by minute till the last is done.
But not the new birds singing in the brake,
And not the buds of our discovery,
The deeper blue, the wilder green, the ache
For beauty that we shadow as we see,
Made heaven, but we, as love's occasion brings,
Took these, and made them Paradisal things.

VIII

The lilacs offer beauty to the sun,
Throbbing with wonder as eternally
For sad and happy lovers they have done
With the first bloom of summer in the sky,
Yet they are newly spread in honour now,
Because, for every beam of beauty given
Out of that clustering heart, back to the bough
My love goes beating, from a greater heaven.
So be my love for good or sorry luck
Bound, it has virtue on this April eve
That shall be there for ever when they pluck
Lilacs for love. And though I come to grieve
Long at a frosty tomb, there still shall be
My happy lyric in the lilac tree.

IX

When they make silly question of my love,
And speak to me of danger and disdain,
And look by fond old argument to move
My wisdom to docility again,
When to my prouder heart they set the pride
Of custom and the gossip of the street,
And show me figures of myself beside
A self diminished at their judgment seat,
Then do I sit as in a drowsy pew
To hear a priest expounding th' heavenly will,
Defiling wonder that he never knew
With stolen words of measured good and ill,
For to the love that knows their counselling,
Out of my love contempt alone I bring.

X

Not love of you is most that I can bring,
Since what I am to love you is the test,
And should I love you more than any thing
You would but be of idle love possessed,
A mere love wandering in appetite,
Counting your glories and yet bringing none,
Finding in you occasions of delight,
A thief of payment for no service done.
But when of labouring life I make a song
And bring it you, as that were my reward,
To let what most is me to you belong,
Then do I come of high possessions lord,
And loving life more than my love of you
I give you love more excellently true.

XI

What better tale could any lover tell
When age or death his reckoning shall write
Than thus, "Love taught me only to rebel
Against these things,—the thieving of delight
Without return; the gospellers of fear
Who, loving, yet deny the truth they bear,
Sad-suited lusts with lecherous hands to smear
The cloth of gold they would but dare not wear.
And love gave me great knowledge of the trees,
And singing birds, and earth with all her flowers,
Wisdom I knew and righteousness in these,
I lived in their atonement all my hours;
Love taught me how to beauty's eye alone
The secret of the lying heart is known."

XII

This then at last; we may be wiser far
Than love, and put his folly to our measure,
Yet shall we learn, poor wizards that we are,
That love chimes not nor motions at our pleasure.
We bid him come, and light an eager fire,
And he goes down the road without debating,
We cast him from the house of our desire,
And when at last we leave he will be waiting.
And in the end there is no folly but this,
To counsel love out of our little learning,
For still he knows where rotten timber is,
And where the boughs for the long winter burning,
And when life needs no more of us at all,
Love's word will be the last that we recall.

Prelude

Though black the night, I know upon the sky,
A little paler now, if clouds were none,
The stars would be. Husht now the thickets lie,
And now the birds are moving one by one,—
A note—and now from bush to bush it goes—
A prelude—now victorious light along
The west will come till every bramble glows
With wash of sunlit dew shaken in song.
Shaken in song; O heart, be ready now,
Cold in your night, be ready now to sing.
Dawn as it wakes the sleeping bird on bough
Shall summon you to instant reckoning,—
She is your dawn, O heart,—sing, till the night
Of death shall come, the gospel of her light.

David and Jonathan

And Jonathan too had honour in his heart,
Jonathan who with an armour-bearer went
Alone by Michmash to the Philistines,
And met a spray of swords because of courage
That made him single greater than a host.
Jonathan too had known his battles, dared
At any hour the coming of death, because
In twilight silence he had walked with God,
Read Him in blossoms and the mountain brooks,
And learnt that death, well known, can alter nothing.
He was a brown man, burnt with love of summer,
His young beard curled, and russet as the eyes
That looked on life, and feared it, yet were master,
Because they knew the tyranny they feared,
Measured it, learnt it, gazed it into nothing.

. . . . . .

And now he watched the boy, the son of Jesse,
David with hair like maples in October,
And skin that women loving coveted,
David with eyes that often by the sheepfolds
Had looked through leaves up to the folds of heaven,

And seeing them crammed with golden fleece of
stars,
Had known how the blood can run because of
beauty.
Jonathan watched him take the armour off
Given by Saul, and choose the bright smooth
pebbles,
And walk out from the Israelitish throng
Into the field against the Philistine giant.
Watching, he snatched his sword and cried to Saul,
" Bid him come back. This murder must not be."
And as he spoke, he knew the words were treason,
His heart alone in all the world was sure
That David was the Lord's appointed arm,
To meet this bulk of dirt, this giant fear
Brandishing out of the loathly camps of evil.
And before Saul could answer, he put down
The sword, and said, " I love him. Let him go."

. . . . . .

But the words, I love him, were not for his father
Saul,
Hardly Jonathan knowing he spake them out.
But as he looked on David love was there,
Waking from that in David that he himself
A little was, and always greatly shaping

Himself towards, so that his name was spoken
Famously in Saul's kingdom. It was courage,
The clean heart, undivided in its doing,
The purpose that, being bodied in the brain,
Thenceforth knew every trickling argument
That fell from tongues of persuading circumstance,
As lures of evil ever threatening life,
That Jonathan loved above all enterprise.
He knew, or the rarer man within him knew,
That once your yea in holy meditation
Had shaped itself in the perfect syllable,
Thenceforth no nay from any other tongue
Or wise or passionate or masterful,
Could be listened to without the shame of sin
Corrupting all your constancy for ever.
He knew the curse of good betraying good,
Till both in bleak irresolution fall.
And all his years was Jonathan's anguish only
To keep this tillage of his wisdom clean.

. . . . . .

Since boyhood he had known Philistia
For the black thing it was, a plague opposed
Always against the loveliness of Israel,
And when his father Saul was anointed king
By Samuel in Ramah, then Jonathan knew

How all the lessons of his youth had been
To fit him for the striking of the men
Who profaned beauty and let the soul be blind.
And he was diligent in bronze and arms,
And kept his body supple, and his eye
Keen, and the coming of his hooves was thunder,
Wherever battle fell. He bore a flame,
Zealous and pure, in the heavens of his mind,
To serve and to instruct. Aye, to instruct—
There was the biting blemish, as we shall see.

. . . . . .

Philistia was foul, and Jonathan knew,
And the voice of God within him was plain and constant
To strike and strike unwearying to the end.
And then the poor, precise, infirmity
That loads good minds with ever seeming virtue,
Until they cast their treasure to the dust,
Crept on him, wound about the gleaming truth
That was his one foundation. Day by day
He was resolved, and then the grain of doubt
Would come to hurt the riding of his thought,
And break the level balance that it had.
Was then the Philistine mere black? That day
Jonathan's arm half paused upon the blow,

And evil went a little scatheless off.
Surely the worst even of adversaries
Had somewhere beams that pointed to salvation,
And hasty judgment might not be the will
Of an all-seeing Lord ? Then would the vengeance
Falter, and stay, and Jonathan's battle failed.
And always then was bitterness and reproach
In the night watches when upon his couch
He looked on the stars studding his little window
Before sleep came. Then he would speak again
The word that single was his valiance,
His only truth, his warrant as a man,
And once again Philistia was doomed.
Then for a season clean the stroke and sure
That Jonathan drove, and black was known for
black,
Till slowly as before would mount and mount
Scruple on scruple, as was not he himself
A little black sometimes, or plainly wicked ?
And should the wicked man not be redeemed ?
Merely destruction surely was no answer,
Since yet the wickedness must wander somewhere ?
How should he say, I, Jonathan of Israel
Am good, and you the Philistine are cursed,
Since in that face was something that had been

Learnt from the buds and corn and frozen hills
That he himself had known for seals of God ?
And would not his power on Israel increase,
Take on a loftier authority,
If to his famous arms he could add a tale
Of counsel working in the hearts of men,
Moving them to a finer charity,
A little pity for offence ? And so
Instruction like a worm was at his roots,
And pride of virtue made Jonathan forget.
Then sometimes as he knew himself betrayed
He would cry upon his spirit in the night—

I, Jonathan, who know
The processes of God
Moving within me,
Turn aside to my idols of desire.
He has taught me the ways
Of Philistine cruelty. He
Shows me the bad man toiling to the ruin
Of beauty and the free spirit on earth,
And has equipped me for the establishment
Of His will in this battle, and I fail.
I am a leaf spinning about the wind,
Who have been shown the ways of steadfastness.

O Israel, I have heard
My dedication made
To your sweet service by the voice of Him,
And I betray
That wisdom, that great simpleness of wisdom,
Inventing in my brain
Fantastic argument
As though God's mind
Had missed the brighter pools
That I alone could visit and gaze into.
He tells me, and I hear
Voices not His.
Knowing, I question. And I am ashamed.
So Jonathan saw walking at his side
Always a shadow that was his own denial.

. . . . . .

And now was April mirrored in the plumes
Of ravens and the green of the young wheat,
And dusky ewes with white lambs in the sun
Lay in the valley plain between the hosts
Of Israel and Philistia. And on this day
Jonathan learnt utter reproach, and love.
There on the plain Goliath stood alone,
Poised in his mighty bulk, with black locks flowing,

A handsbreadth taller even than Saul the king
Who shouldered it above the men of Israel,
And beat his words of sure defiance out,
Ringing across the windless noon. And all
Israel heard, and fear was on them, knowing,
If thus the issue, how it should prevail.
And Jonathan in the tent of Saul his father,
Watched, and his blood was quick, and in his mind
He strove against the last of doubt. And then
The young man David stood before them, bidden
By Saul, who heard one say, " There is a boy
New come from tending sheep in Bethlehem,
And seeks the king." And David stood before them,
And asked no leave, but said, " There was a cause.
It bade me come, and I will fight with him."
And Saul denied, but David did not hear
Denial, saying, " The wild beasts of the field
I with my hand have slain at the fold's gate,
And this is mine to do." And David stood,
Greater than argument while Saul armed him there.
And Jonathan saw the purpose that he was not,
Glowing and bodied, and his love was born.

. . . . . .

Then David flung the armour off, and said,
" I am David, and I know not these strange arms.

I must go out as I have always been,
Not girt with new occasion. It is I,
David the shepherd that am David still,
And I know nothing of your spears and plate.
A sheepskin have I worn, and in my hand
A sling, and pebbles taken from the brook.
Now shall I go, content that God has watched me
So habited and armed through all my youth.
Should I pretend another David now,
I should meet this man with neither honour nor hope.
If I am sent against the Philistine
Out of God's anger, and I know it is so,
It is not one the chosen of Saul's hosts,
But I, David of Bethlehem must go,
The son of Jesse, and keeper of his flocks."

. . . . . .

Almost the tears were seen in Jonathan's eyes,
Because of David's words, of which he knew
The poor ghosts hiding somewhere in his own heart.
And then he spoke his fear, and then the words,
Resting his sword, " I love him. Let him go."
And David stept out of the emerald light
That played up from the grass floor of the tent,
Into the full flood of the April noon,

And walked a little way, and those two stood
Parted a hundred paces, the man of terror,
Hewn massy and with shock of builded limbs,
And David moulded like a sea boy risen
From caves of music where the water spins
Wet sand into the shapes of flowing flowers;
David with limbs all bright with the sun's tones,
And ruddy locks curling with youth and light,
His body all alert on steady loins,
Clean spun of flesh that knew the winter snows,
And mellow pools of summer, and the dews
Dropping among the crocuses of dawn.
His sandle-straps bound ankles as a girl's,
And fluttering to his knees the sheepskin hung,
Cloaking one shoulder, while the other gleamed.
And there he paused, the sling in his right hand,
His left hand fingering the pouch of pebbles,
While Israel fearing murmured, and the hosts
Of Philistine derision rocked the noon.
Then did Goliath cry, "Am I a dog,
For a boy's whipping? Have you not a man,
That you would send a cleaner up of crumbs
From the queen's table? Come then, and be
broken,
For birds to find you and the dogs at night."

And Jonathan heard Philistia shout again,
And David, like a flame unwinded, stood
Quivering at the cry, and laid a stone
In the sling's fold, and cast his staff, and ran,
Fleet as the king bird gliding under leaves,
Towards Goliath. And a giant spear
Swung from the Philistine hand, and forty paces
Sang in the air and brushed the flying sheepskin,
And sudden David's feet were planted firm,
Locked on the earth, and circling in the sun
The tight thong flashed and loosened, and the stone
Smote the Philistine wrath above the eyes,
And the day was clouded from him, and he fell.

. . . . . .

Then Israel spared not. And, when night was come,
Jonathan sent for David to his tent,
And those two sat while the yellow torches burned,
And Jonathan spoke and said, " David, my brother,
To-day you have made a story that shall be
For ever fruitful in the heart of man.
This day is David's. But of this day I too
Share, not in the honour, but in the harvesting,
Or the harvesting I think is wholly mine.
Shall I speak on ? " And David said, " Speak on."

Then Jonathan—" This morning there was a man,
And it was Jonathan, who many years
Had gone snared in a purpose not his own,
That is, not truly mine. Always I knew,
Walking by that self I said was honest,
Another self, the true self, in a shadow,
Or at an angle that my eyes refused.
I was a proud man, David, very virtuous,
Or, in fairness to myself, desiring virtue,
Truly desiring it, I may say that.
And yet even in that desire there moved
A lie, for I knew the virtue of my desire
Was something tainted. No—I knew it not,
But that other self walking beside me knew it,
And whispered, I knew, a thing that I would not
hear.
Always it whispered, as I stood alone,
I said, in subtle thought among all Israel.
God had spoken to me, David, that the Philistine
Was evil, evil, that was all God said,
And bade me strike as a man by God assured.
But the man to whom God spoke I put aside,
The still self walking, whispering, in the shadow.
And I, the Jonathan of daily light,
Tempered the word of God, I tempered it—

I who should be God's outcast doing so.
I counted evil twenty different ways,
And none of them plain evil. I diced with God,
And the dice fell as often to my hand,
It seemed, as His, but falling so the whisper
Was ever shadowed at my ear, unheard.
And ever as this new intelligence,
This pride of thought, crept over me and filled
My dawn and noon and sleep, a hunger grew,
A dreadful hunger for that self denied,
And every word I spoke for righteousness
Turned bitter on my lips, because I knew
That every word was righteousness undone.
Such was the man this morning when you came,
Who from the king's tent watched you, David.
Then
Change and completion and I know not what
Of heavenly fulfilment fell upon me.
Not from myself, nor of my own devising,
But marvellously spoken in a space
Of golden light that glowed about the form
Of a boy standing in my father's tent.
Quite suddenly the thing I lacked was there,
The shadow whispering at my side had gone
And stood there bodied in you, David, brother,

O dear young shepherd from your sheepfolds called—
Nay Jonathan myself it was there standing,
Or barren branches of myself in flower,
My jailored thought flooded with light of song.
And in that moment nothing was between
Your soul and mine, and knowing you, I loved,
Since love is understanding, and must come
When mind looks on the presence of very mind.
I loved you, David, and I love, and ever—
Because my mind, even in one day's passing,
Has learnt you as no years could better learn—
My love is fixed upon you. And, moreover,
Since from this hour I must for ever know
Some element of me lodged sole in you,
Some certainty in you alone to be
Among my weeds the patient husbandman,
I must in your love prosper or not at all.
Now therefore, David, let a covenant be
Between us from this day, for the heart knows."

. . . . . .

David and Jonathan under the long torches
Were silent then. And David's eyes were fixed
Long upon Jonathan, as eyes may sometimes look
On eyes, and see no face, looking beyond
Into unimaged life, into the brain

Moving behind the circumstance of flesh,
Eyes that to-morrow passing might hardly know
The mere face that to-night they gaze upon.
And Jonathan having spoken, waited there
While David searched him slowly with still eyes.
Then David rose, and drew the tent-fold back,
And looked upon the stars of Palestine
Long, and a mallow moon ; and Jonathan waited.
Then David came again, and spoke, " I too,
Standing this morning in your father's tent,
Knew that a life unwonted was near me there.
And now you have spoken, and the love you say,
I know, and as your will is so is mine.
Something I am for you that none can be.
Let it be so, but all is not then said.
This morning when I smote the Philistine,
I was God's purpose, that I must believe.
But purpose only is not all of God,
Hearing you now, I know it is not all.
When first I saw you I did not know it then—
Only, facing the Philistine, something new
A moment marked me, and unnoted went,
No touch of it upon my will. But now
I have heard you speak, and what it was I know.
You loved me, Jonathan, seeing, as I stood,

That shadowy self of you of which you tell me
Suddenly living fearless in the sun.
That is your reaping of my field, and I
Glory to give it you. But were that all,
Proud to be loved, I should not love again.
But now I know for me is too a reaping.
Your shadow to my living purpose leaps,
And that is wonderful. But as you spoke
Some David hidden from the man that slew
Goliath listened also, and is now
With us for ever. And he that wrought this life
Is you, Jonathan of doubts and speculation,
The man who sits there plainly now, the mere
Jonathan when the shadow is forgotten.
Now do I know my purpose magnified,
Sure as of old, but learning in its flight,
Of pity and the sad heart of man from you,
And how the jealous and unmerciful,
Being stricken down, are but poor sorrows too.
So, Jonathan my brother, as you take,
So do you give, and in us now shall be
The perfect whole of purpose and compassion,
And resolution without pride of heart.
Now therefore will I make the covenant,
Knowing that never more can you or I

Without this love be better than a tale
Of corrupting seed and fallow-lands unsown."

. . . . . .

Now Jonathan rose and put the torches out,
And a grey beam of dawn was on those two.
And Jonathan took his outer garment off,
Which was the king's son's, and robed David there,
And he took the sword that Saul had given him,
Belted in gold and cased in figured steel,
And it hung on David's loins. And Jonathan said,
" Who fails in this, that is the last betrayal,
The quenching of the holy spirit of God."
And David said, " So be it." And they embraced,
And kissed. And David went into the dawn.
And Jonathan watched until the day was full.

The Maid of Naaman's Wife

That was the proud woman, Naaman's wife,
Basking at noon under the Syrian fans,
While Naaman, the leprous mighty captain,
Proud glowing flesh now silver-skinned and tainted,
Walked in contagion here and there, apart.
His wife, the unblemished Naaman in her mind,
The man who, coming with the spoils and shouts,
Had made a hundred triumphs hers, when all
The Syrian women courted her for that,
Now saw in the pestilent limbs shame and reproach,
Some treachery that made her, who was mate
Of Syria's pride, bondwoman of a leper.
She must nurse her blame, since he was Naaman still,
With an old honour paid by steadfastness,
The mark of Syria's compassion. Black
Thoughts were her only payment for betrayal,
But in secret she could play them without pity,—
Let the fans beat, they could not beguile her from that.

. . . . . .

And Naaman had loved her, but not now,

Knowing the uses that his love had been,
How given for her to squander it in pride.

. . . . . .

Syria out of Israel had brought
Captives, and among them one, a maid,
A little maid, just troubled with the touch
Of womanhood upon her body and thought,
And she served Naaman's wife, a lonely girl,
To answer bidding, and covet little tones
Of kindness that she heard go to and fro,
But not for her. She trembled as she stood
At the proud woman's couch, because a fault
In orders done meant scolding and even rods.
And she had but two joys. One, to remember
A Galilean town, and the blue waters
That washed the pebbles that she knew so well,
Yellow in sunlight, or frozen in the moon,
A little curve of beach, where she would walk
At any hour with an old silver man,
Her father's father, her sole companion,
Who told her tales of Moses and the prophets
That lived in the old days. And of that time
She had but now poor treasuries of the mind,
Little seclusions when, the day's work done,
She made thought into prayer before she slept;

These, and a faded gown that she had brought
Into captivity, patterned with sprigs of thyme,
And blades of wheat, and little curling shells,
And signs of heaven figured out in stars,
Made by a weaver that her grandsire knew,
A gift on some thanksgiving. She might not wear it,
Being suited as became a slave, but often
At night she would spread it in her loneliness,
And think how finely she too might be drest,
As finely as any proud woman of them all,
If the God of Israel had not visited her
Surely for sin, though she could not remember.
Thus one joy was. And then the Lord Naaman,
This wonder soiled, this pitiful great captain
Forbidden all that he had so proudly been—
To worship him, that was her other joy.
When the dusk came, and the city fell to silence,
And out of his poor banishment he would walk,
She followed him, knowing the very hour,
And all her heart was flooded through with pity,
Because she knew the leprosy left still
A Naaman untainted and lovely.
Then in her mind was the proud woman a loathing,
Who dared to waste a marvel such as this,

The right in the world's knowledge so to love.
O pitiful evil blasting so great a flesh,
Walling a spirit so governing itself
In spite of desolation. A maid's thought thus
Knew how the frames of mastery can suffer.

. . . . . .

Sometimes at night when not even lepers walked,
Solitary in the Syrian meadows she
Would wander in the old perplexity
That the moon makes of love. Never, she knew,
Could any adoration that she brought
Touch even the Lord Naaman's banishment,
The Naaman fallen from the time when even
Great ladies dare not speak the thing they felt.
She was nothing, or the world could never know
If she was more than nothing; a maid to bind
Tresses for beauty that was not her own.
And yet she knew that she had beauty too,
A little hermit beauty that might spend
Royally if it dare and a man would speak,—
Royally, Naaman, but he could not hear.
But still for all the silence of her lips,
And heart with promise nothing known, she loved—
Loved the sad leper walking in the dusk,
Loved the great lord, loved even his leprosy,

Since by it he came a little down to her,
Loved him, and knew that her love was the sum
Of all that loving, and must be. But even so,
She knew her love an honester thing than any
That the proud woman had. O moon, she thought,
Could you not make me truly tell this love,
This love pulsing along my blood and brain,
As midnight surges going through the sky ?
And long she pondered how she best might serve.

. . . . . .

Then one day when the fans moved, and she stood
Ministering with her perfumes at the couch,
Her mistress, with eyes that meant the thought
was nothing,
Said, " Is it not grievous that my lord goes thus ? "
And the maid felt the colour at her throat
Flow round her neck and flood up to her temples,
But knowing, feared not, or put her fear aside,
And said, " Would God my lord were in Samaria,
To seek Elisha there, a prophet, lady,
Whom God hath taught to cure whom he will
cure."
She spoke, and the bright bowl trembled in her
hands,
And fear because of her words made the tongue dry

As the woman looked with still cold eyes upon her.
But the word passed from lip to lip, and the king
Heard it, and sent for Naaman and said,
"A girl among the slaves that you brought in
From Israel has spoken a strange thing,
Of one Elisha, a prophet whom they obey,
Saying that he could bid the blemish off
That is cheating Syria of her proudest man.
Now therefore journey to him, and I will send
Word to Israel's king, that he shall bless
Favours from us in whom his fortune lies,
Bidding him call this prophet to your cause.
Go, and the love of Syria go with you."

. . . . . .

Then Naaman with his servants went at dawn,
And Naaman's wife saw how again might come
Her mastery among the women of Syria.
Yet was the little maid her hatred now,
Lest of her word should come this resurrection.
And Naaman went, and Israel's king was glad,
Because of Syria's favour, and sent down
The hill to where Elisha lived among
Farmers of flax and goatherds and a few
Unhappy men who brought their sorrow to God,
Asking his mercy on the Syrian lord.

And Naaman stood before the prophet of Israel,
And told his grief. And Elisha looked upon him,
Measured his faith, and bade him bathe his body
Seven times in the river of Jordan, and be
Whole. And Naaman questioned, and was wrath,
As was not any river of Damascus
Purer than Jordan, and in more virtue flowing ?
But, little, his servants said, was this to do,
And, as persuasion led him, he went down
And seven times let Jordan cover him,
And came with a clean body as of old,
A strong man with the tides of blood before him,
With equal limbs for all the spirit could dare,
And into Syria he sang upon his riding.

. . . . . .

And tidings came to the Syrian king of this,
Heralding a Naaman mightier than ever,
With clean flesh and a wisdom all matured,
And all the city rang upon his coming,
The king and his estate, people and priests,
And soldiers glad of their old captain again,
And matrons with their girls, and the rich merchants,
All shouted Naaman, Naaman, through the streets.
And Naaman's wife stood at the king's right hand,

Her slave-borne canopy coloured and spangled,
While the great fans beat upon her pride again,
And Naaman in plumes and plate and mail
Again was master of the Syrian hosts.

. . . . . .

Afar, beyond the barriers of the streets,
Pressing among the crowd for a moment's seeing,
The Israelitish maid, between her duties,
Watched with a proud flush beating down her limbs.
And shyly she had on a faded gown,
Patterned with sprigs of thyme and blades of wheat,
And paling stars and little curling shells.
And as the shouting rose, she watched in silence,
With trembling lips, and Naaman passed by her,
And her hands moved towards him, and fell down,
Then stole upon her bosom, as they would ease
The aching beauty of her loneliness.
And there unnoted as he passed she stood,
With not a thought from all that world upon her.
Only, when service came again, she saw
A glowing hatred in the proud woman's eyes.
And in the night she thought of it, and wept,
But not for any hatred were her tears.

Lake Winter

Full summer dusk was round him as he stood
On the hill-top, over the calling sheep
Drifting along the pastured downs. The moon
Far off was rising from the Sussex sea.
Above him, building up into the sky,
Black, and with pointing sails now skeletoned,
A windmill gathered strays of evening wind
Whispering through the splitting timbers. Still
The setting sun washed with a fuller gold
The golden sheaves patterned upon a cone
Of downland by him farther from the sea.
So still, he seemed a thing woven of earth,
A life rooted and fixed as were the oaks
Locked in the soil, their bases webbed with fleece
Of sheltering ewes, he watched across the valley,
And the hour passed, and the black mill grew and
grew,
And then a light came in a far window
Of a grey farm cresting the hill beyond,
And sudden tides beat on him as he saw
A white dress moving in the distant pines.

. . . . . .

Lake Winter, a five hundred acre man,
Was English, bred far back, a part of England,
With South and North and Midland in his blood,
And somewhere Devon, somewhere Suffolk too.
He had been born of love. They had been lovers,
Who made him, and no more, but they were lovers.
She of a proud house, proud to make it prouder
With wit and beauty, and a young brain glowing,
And a swift body fearless and pitiful;
And he a Cotswold yeoman, thrift and power,
And mastery of earth and herds and flocks,
And knowledge of all seasons and their fruits,
And a heart of meditation, all his birthright;
Ten generations deep from Gloucester stone.
And those two met, and loved, and of their love
Came a new purity of blood and limb,
As of a purpose slowly moulding them.
And long they waited, and then one summer noon,
He, coming northward from his Cotswold home,
Found her by Rydal as she had bidden him,
And proudly stride to stride they took the road,
Sure youth by youth, and to Helvellyn's foot
They came, and climbed up to the brighter air,
And into the wind's ardour still went on,

Until upon the mountain top they stood,
And lake by lake was fading in the dusk.
Out of the plains they saw the moon move up
And over them the deeper blue came on,
The faint stars glowing into mastery.
And in that splendour of a summer hill,
Amid the mellow-breathing night, where yet
The poppies of the valley could not come,
There was conceived a boy. . . .
And sorrow came
Upon their love. Before the moon again
Was full upon Helvellyn, the Cotswold lover
With a great elm was blasted in a storm,
And lay, a burnt thing, in a Cotswold grave.
And she went out, took her inheritance,
And lived apart, and the man-child was born.
She called him Lake, for those fading lakes of dusk,
And gave him her own name. And twenty years
She tended him, and died ; and from her substance
Lake Winter now for fifteen years had kept
His Sussex acres in fertility.
Such was the man, so born, so passionately made,
So knit of English earth and generations,
Who now upon the summer evening watched—

His manhood full upon his middle years—
A white dress moving in the distant pines.

. . . . . .

Down to the valley from their hills they came,
Lake Winter and the woman that he loved.
He waited by a long brown garden wall,
Mottled with moss and lichen, where in the dusk
Like a great moth a late flycatcher wove,
And watched her coming down a rutted path,
Towards him. And the flowing of her body,
Sure step through fugitive cadences of limb,
Up to the little golden arch of hair,
Was lovely as a known yet wanted tale.

. . . . . .

Zell Dane, the wife of Martin Dane, who held
Tollington Manor farm, was ten years wed.
Dane was an honest man by groom and horse,
Paid pew-rent and his losing wagers, thought
The British Empire lived at Westminster,
Stood by the State and rights of property,
Drank well, and knew the barmaids of a county.
He married Zell, and neither could have said
Why it was done. Ten years had gone since then,

And he was now a half-forgotten habit,
She, some queer porcelain stuff beyond his knowing.

. . . . . .

Lake Winter came and went at Tollington,
As other neighbours, a little in Dane's mind
Suspect for certain rumours of his birth,
But known for a straight rider and plain speaker,
Who meant his words and had words for his meaning.
And Lake and Zell, between the jests at table,
Where they could match the best wits of the room,
Would talk of things that Dane and the rest counted
As pointing ways not good for level minds.
Why pose about Beethoven, and Debussy,
Or these French fellows Degas and Picasso,
When there were Marcus Stone, and *A Long, Long Trail*,
And *A Little Grey Home in the West*, that common folk
Could understand ? And, however the truth might be,
It wasn't decent openly to say
That William Wordsworth was a better poet—
Though more or less in a poet was no matter—

Because it seemed that once in his flaming youth
He had loved gloriously in France. . . .

. . . . . .

Dane heard and saw,
And was a little troubled that clear heads
Should cloud and squander thus, a little scornful.
Still if it gave them pleasure, and it but meant
Mind with mind idling together so,
Winter could come and go for all he cared,
He wouldn't grudge . . . and then the doubt began,
A thought that somewhere under all this play
And nimbleness was crouching the true thing,
Lust, plain lust. There was between man and woman,
So Dane had learnt, two several conditions,
A compact to keep smooth the day's affairs,
That, and plain lust. This mind play was a sham. . . .
Winter and Zell were lusting, that was all . . .
Then let them . . . damn it, let the matter be . . .
Time would show all, and there were crops and hounds.

. . . . . .

They stood together by the dusky wall.
And long their lips met, in a hushed world fading,
A night of beauty fading in their own.
And then " I made a rhyme for you to-day,
When the last sheaves were binding I made it,
thus——"

I have no strange or subtle thought,
And the old things are best,
In curious tongues I am untaught,
Yet I know rest.

I know the sifting oakleaves still
Upon a twilit sky,
I hear the fernowl on the hill
Go wheeling by.

I know my flocks and how they keep
Their times of field and fold,
My scholarship can sow and reap,
From green to gold.

The circled stars from down to sea
I reckon as my gains,
The swallows are as dear to me
As loaded wains.

Yet these were ghosts and fugitive,
Until upon your step they came
By revelation's lips to live
In your dear name.

I saw you walking as dusk fell,
And leaves and wains and heaven and birds
Were miracles my blood may tell,
And not my words.

"And yet I would not lose the tidings come
On so dear words, though the blood knows it all,
As the song says." She spoke; and from the valley
Slowly towards the mill, by ghostly flocks
That stole about the meadows of the moonrise,
They walked, and made this argument of love.

Lake. How shall they stand for wisdom, who forbid
The body's love, which is so small a thing,
Yet let the souls, or minds, or what you will
Be mated, as though spirit were the drudge,
For no-one's heed, and limbs alone to be,
As though clay were the gold, inviolate?

If I could grudge love coming anywhere,
Falling even on whom I loved in all,
I think the body at least should have no share
Of jealousy from me, which should be spent
Rather on minds meeting above my own,
Myself an exile from their understanding.
Beloved, in the mating of our minds
I am all peace to walk thus in your presence,
And in that peace your body of my desire,
And all my earth, as passionate as any,
Seem snares to tempt us to the loss of all,
Since by them the world threatens this our peace,
Which else we may so gather, undenied.
Then is not flesh merely the trouble of love,
When love goes thus, as love between us now?

. . . . . .

Zell took his hand, and her life was in his veins,
And his words beat back upon him as she spoke.

. . . . . .

Zell. Dear, you are wise of all your books, and speech
Of windy downs, and polities of men,
And the old passions weaving history,
And strong and gentle things of sea and earth,
And the poor passing of the life of man,

But not in this. You have your great-heart courage
For all such ardours as might make you seem
Some fabled hero standing against fate,
But not in this. In sifting vanity
From the right honour, and building from ambition,
You have a vision constant as the tides,
But not in this. They may look Sussex over
For any man who found a crooked word
Ever upon your lips, and vainly look,
Because, dear, truth is an old habit in you,
But not in this. Here in the night enchanted,
With not an ear to catch the whispered truth,
Let nothing but the truth between us be—
I love you, Lake; I love the fair mind moving
In equal joy among men's praise or censure;
I love the courage of its lonely flight,
Here in a land of light convenience.
I love you for the years that you have given
To Sussex plough and pasture till they are grown
Surer and richer in your wit than any.
I love you for the love in which you gather
My mind that from youth on has gone unmated,
And then I love you for the bearing kept
In you when slight occasions something royal
Take on because you silently are there.

I know you, Lake, for a man worthy honour,
And well to honour is well to delight.
But, dear, with all this giving of my love,
Great and unmeasured giving, sending back
In joy the worship that you bring to me,
I love your glowing body, and you love mine.
No words, or thrift of philosophic thought,
Can put that love out of the love we are.
At night, alone, when the dark covers me,
I ache for you, body for body I ache.
And then I know that over you as well
The dear, forlorn, resistless pain is full.
We may persuade, virtuously persuade,
That this is but an accident of love,
Not of love's very being, a thing to bind
In brave captivity at the world's bidding,
But I know, as you know it, that persuasion
So made is outcast in the house of truth.
I love you, and the thing I love is made
All wonderful of flesh and spirit both,
Body and mind inseparably one,
And I must spend my love on all or nothing.
Should I but love those limbs so rightly planned
By ancestry so wise of English earth,
It were a simple harlotry in me.

But, Lake, to love the life and not the house,
The living house so admirably built
Of tissue flawless as the material stars,
Wherein the life I love is manifest,
Were harlotry no less I know than that.
You, the dear Lake of my idolatry,
For I am something near it, as you are,
Are one life, whereto pilgrim thought conspires
With all the cunning moulding of the flesh,
And of my brain and body is my love,
Dream to your dream, desire to your desire.
If you should die, my memory of you
Would be no tale of the mere mind conceiving,
Of contemplation thriving thus or thus,
In trance of spaces where not even wings nor breath
Recall the moving of substantial things.
Rather in me for ever should be glowing
The imaging mind mated in equal limbs,
Thought visible in lines of the athlete,
Wisdom persuading in the lover's clasp.
And how should thought know thought until the whole
Of body's beauty is by body learnt ?
Until the trial of that most dear seclusion
Is past, and all the dangers of mere lust

Disproved, when in possession is no stale
Regret and disillusion, how should be known
That the still hours of thought with thought are stable
Against the wearing of dissolving time?
Dear, we must love by all the tokens of love,
Before the presence of love beyond dispute
Is between us and for ever fixed.

. . . . . .

Lake heard, and knew that answer could be none,
Then by the sheep-tracks on the silver downs
Silent they walked, and midnight came apace,
And by the bases of the mill they went,
Close moving, arm by arm, and down again
Towards the valley, where again they stood,
And let their lives beat out upon the night.
And as they waited on farewell, a form
Came up before them, and Martin Dane stood there,
And "by your leave," he murmured, and went on.
Then Zell, "To-morrow, when the moon is full,
Meet me beside the mill mound. Martin goes
To Farnham for the otter hunting." Lake
Took her and kissed, and with no word they parted
Where the light still looked from the hill-side farm

Over the valley to his home. And he
As dreaming passed again by the mill to sleep.

. . . . . .

Firmer the mould, surer the flight of boughs,
Familiar move the bright plains of the air,
And newly steadfast the gospel he had known
Year by year written on his Sussex life,
Now seemed to Lake this day. Among his men,
All day he drew and pegged the rickyard straw,
And piled the barn from floor to the swallows' beam,
Brown throated and brown armed, the golden rose
Of summer wind glowing upon his face,
And all the phrasing of his body good.
And twilight fell on the full harvest home,
And the barn doors were closed, and painted wagons
Stood empty by the ricks, with sunken wheels
Smeared with the fallen husks, and voice was none,
And silence with the moon was over all.

. . . . . .

Lake through the eve walked his familiar paths,
Counting the labour of his years; the shed
Where morn and night the cattle came to stall,
Empty and still now but for the timbering rats;
The low smooth paven dairy, where the moon
Now sent a shaft on one full yellow bowl;

The barn so happily at teeming time again,
The rickyard stacked with hurdles by the fence,
The long loft over plough and wagon teams.
Among the heavy apple trees he passed,
By ledgy sheep-track, over the new stubble,
Across the valley, and in the shadow kept
Of Martin Dane's home hop-yard, and again
Back to his own hill-side. And in the south,
Beyond the moon, over the midnight sea,
Came up a cloud all heavy with black wind.

. . . . . .

Zell by the mill was standing when he came,
Now darkly gowned so that she seemed a shadow,
Black by the black mill, save for the white face,
And gold hair and white hands that caught the
moonlight.
Together the wide wooden steps they climbed,
By broken treads and splitting rail, and he
Lifted the rusted latch, and there within
Were folded sacks perished along the seam,
Forgotten with the dust, and the bare walls,
Now weather-broken. Above them a dim light
Showed them a laddered way still up. They came
Into the high roof chamber, and a rent
In the top timbers let the moonlight in,

Half moulding to their vision spars and beams,
The mill's old ghostly life, and sail-cloth piled
From the use of generations. A window space
Just from their towery refuge let them look
Over familiar earth now tranced. And Lake
Saw yet again his roofs and acres loved,
Tenderly, as though interpreters
Of his long care and their good yielding hours
Freshly upon his senses ministered; Zell
Across the valley saw a lone slumbering light,
While from the south the mounting darkness crept,
And the wind gathered, moaning upon the mill,
Filling its frame with a low pulsing breath.

. . . . . .

And over love the heavenly figures went
In their unchanging change. No longer now
The moonlight shafted through the torn roof-timbers,
And star by star crossed the small field of sky,
And in those hours of peace that only comes
With passion mated and of passion born,
Lake knew within him stirring that far beauty
Of an old starry still Helvellyn night.
And Zell made all the wisdom of her words
Wisdom of life, so simple and unclouded,

Leaving no fume of trouble in the dark,
Ending for ever the brain's captivity.

. . . . . .

They slept. And still the south wind gathered up,
Gust upon gust to a full swelling tide,
And the great sail-timbers groaned, and blackness fell
Over the mill that trembled as in pain
Of age now nearly with all quarrels done.
Along the ridges of the downs it swept,
Beating the boughs of ash and elm, a flood
Of storm exulting in deliverance.
And fury up and down the valleys played
And rose and spilt and sank upon the hills,
And to and fro the thunder bayed, till sudden
The world about the sleeping lovers shook
With sounding doom. And Zell, waking, cried out,
And he beside her stood, and folded her
A moment as from fear, and kissed her, and they turned
To go, when from the bases of the mill
A shrieking as of life being crushed and torn
Clanged out upon the beating elements,
And the hurt timbers, whipped and wrencht, sent up
A last fierce wail, and for a moment swayed,

Then gave the life up of a hundred years,
And to the earth the mill plunged in defeat.

. . . . . .

Sleepers along the hill-top in the night
Stirred as a ruin above the thunder broke,
And slept again. And dawn upon a world
Of leaves and downs and sheep washed into bright-
ness
Came on that Sussex out of a clear sky,
And on the sea the little ships went on
With sails just filled with a small virgin wind.
And slowly one by one the village came
To see the old mill that their sires had known,
And sires beyond them, blasted in a world
Where peace was lord as in immortal mood.
They stood and silence kept them until one
Saw suddenly upon the dawn breeze blown,
Out from a mound of split and twisted timber
A strand of golden hair. And strong arms worked
Until upon the grass unheeding lay
Those two dear bodies locked in a love that now
Was beyond malice and denial and fear.

. . . . . .

And Martin Dane home from his hunting came,
And heard, and saw them lying side by side,

And wondered how could folly pay so much
For so unsound and gossipy an end,
Gave his instructions for a decent grave,
And found a tap-room topic to his mind.

. . . . . .

That night the promise of the dawn was full,
And on the broken mill a clear moon shone,
Silvering all the ways the lovers knew.
And by the wreck a shadowy figure watched,
Half Lake, and half that old Helvellyn lover,
And on the night a whispered cadence fell—

Again in the world a story has been made,
These looked upon beauty unafraid,
O these were lovely, these were the great ones, they
dared,
And denied not, but upon love's bidding fared.

Pity them not; they would scorn that as your hate,
They knew the voices, they knew the hours that
mate
With hours beyond all judgment of mankind,
These were the proud adventurers of the mind.

Kindled for ever because of them shall be
A wiser freedom. The long lanes of the sea,
The golden acres of Sussex shall holy keep
Their names, their love, their ending. Let them sleep.

Gold

There is a castle on a hill,
  So far into the sky,
That birds that from the valley-beds
  Up to the turrets fly,
Climbing towards the sun can feel
  The clouds go tumbling by.

But always far above the clouds
  The sun is shining there,
It shines for ever on those walls;
  And the great boughs that bear
Harvests of never fading fruit
  Are golden everywhere.

Who journeys to that castled crest
  Finds, with his journey done,
All ages and all colours in
  Cascades of light that run
Over the broad weirs of the air
  For ever from the sun.

Two things are silver : flower of plum
When April yet is cold ;
And willowed floods that of the moon
Quiet leases hold.
That castle in the sky alone
Of living things is gold.

Between unfathomable blue
And the bright belts of green,
Midway the plains of heaven and earth,
Rock-borne it stands between
Woods and the sky, a golden world
Where only gold is seen.

Old carvers in the stone have cut
Forests and wraths and herds,
And these are gold : the dials tell
The sun in golden words ;
The very jackdaws, from the towers
Wheeling, are golden birds.

The minting of the sun is on
The gravel everywhere,
The yellow walls are fleeces washed

In pools of sunny air,
That coming to that castle place
All men are Jasons there.

Trancelike to stand upon that hill
When the deep summer sings,
Gold-clad, gold-hearted, and gold-voiced,
And sings and sings and sings,
Is as to wait a rising world
In flight of golden wings.

And I have walked with love that way,
And on that golden crest
The sun was happy for my love,
For she is golden-tressed,
Red gold, that of all golden things
The great sun marks for best.

O golden castle of the sky
Hereafter gold can be
Only your image when the sun
Transfigured her for me,
Till she was golden-clouded Jove,
And I her Danäe.

Hereafter in the chambered night
When linkèd love is told,
One thought shall spare to climb that hill
Into the sunbright fold,
For a great summer noon when love
Was gold, and gold, and gold.

Burning Bush

From babyhood I have known the beauty of earth—
I learnt it, I think, in the strange months before
birth,
I learnt it passing and passing by each moon
From the harvest month into my natal June.
My mother, the dear, the lovely I hardly knew,
Bearing me must have walked and wandered through
Stubble of silver or gold, as moon or sun
Lit earth in the days when my body was begun.
And then October with leaves splendid and blown
She watched with my little body a little grown,
And winter fell, and into our being passed
Firm frost and icy rivers and the blast
Of winds that on the iron clods of plough
Beat with an unseen charging. Then the bough
Of spring came green, and her glad body stirred
With a son's wombèd leaping, and she heard
Songs of the air and woods and waterways,
And with them singing the coming of my days.
And nesting time drew on to summer flowers,
And me unborn she taught through patient hours.
Then on that first June day, with spices blown

Of roses over clover crops unmown,
And grey wind-lifted leaves and blossom of bean,
She gave her dear white beauty to the keen
Anguish of women, and brought my body to birth
Already skilled in the sculptures of the earth.

Then in the days when her breasts nourished me,
Daily she walked, that happy girl, to see
How summer prospered to bring the harvest on,
And how the gardens and how the orchards shone
With scarlet and blue and yellow flowers and fruit,
And hear with equal love the lonely flute
Of legendary satyrs in the wood,
Or the still voice of Christ in bachelorhood.
And she would come I know to me her son
With lovely secret gossip of journeys done
In fields where some day my own feet should go.
It was not gossip in words that I could not know,
Mere ease and pleasure for her mother wit,
But such as I could feel the joy of it
Beating about my baby blood and sense,
Maternal tending of intelligence

In the unwhispered rites of bosom and lip,
Divinings worded in bodily fellowship.
And every shape and colour and scent she knew,
Were intimations winding, folding, through
My infancies of flesh and thought, each one
To find its unblemished record and copy done
In little moods drawn from the suckling-breast . . .
That now, in manhood, when I find the nest
Of the chaffinch moulded in the elder tree,
And looking on that lichen cup can see
The images of eternity and space
Lavished upon a small bird's dwelling-place:
Or when from some blue passage of the sky
I know that also colour can prophesy:
Or, ghosted on the brushing tides of wheat,
The gossip of a Galilean street,
So many Sabbaths gone, I hear again,
And his hands plucking that immortal grain:
Or when by spectral ancestries I pass
Again to Eden, as the orchard grass
Gives out the scent of mellow apples blown
From windy boughs—all these, I know, were
known
By that dear mother when the boy to come
Was the zeal and gospel of her martyrdom.

Then came the time when I could walk with her,
We pilgrims of the fields, with everywhere
Strange leaves, and spreading of earth, and hedge-
row themes,
And mossy walls, and bubbling of the streams,
And the way of clouds, and the full moon to
wane,
The bird-song in the lilacs after rain,
And month by month the coming of the flowers,
For me to learn in speech, as had been ours
Knowledge unspoken while she fashioned me . . .
And then she died; and I went on to be
Through lonely boyhood her disciple still,
A wanderer by many a Berkshire hill,
By water-meadows of the Oxford plain,
By the thick oaks of Avon, with the strain
Of an old yeoman wisdom dreaming on
New beauty ever following beauty gone,
Until I knew my earth and her raiment fair
In every difference of the seasons' wear,
Long years her scholar, with learning of her ways
To slip unleasht all singing into praise
Should learning yet by some enchantment be
Bidden to passion's better husbandry.

And the enchanted bidding fell. And you,
O Love, it was that spelt the earth anew.

O Love, you silent wayfarer,
How many years all unaware
By blackthorn hedge, and spinney green
With larch, I wandered, while unseen
You in my shadow walked, nor made
Even a whisper in the shade.

O Love, on many an evening hill
I watched the day go down, the still
Dark woods, the far great rivers wind,
Thin threads of light. And I was blind,
Or seeing knew not, for you were
Beside me still, yet hidden there.

O Love, as year by year went on,
And budding primroses were gone,
And berries fell, and still the bright
Crocuses came in the night,
You left me to my task alone,
O Love, so near me and unknown.

O Love, though she who bore me set
Earth's love for ever on me, yet
Some word withheld still troubled me,
Some presence that I could not see,
Till you, dear alien, should come,
And doctrine be no longer dumb.

O Love, one April night I heard
The doctrine's everlasting word,
And you beneath that starry sky,
Unknown, were with me suddenly,
Yet there was no new meeting then,
But some old marriage come again.

O Love, and now is earth my friend,
Telling me all, until the end
When I shall in the earth be laid
With all my maps and fancies made,
And you, Love, were the secret earth
Of my blind following from birth.

O Love, you happy wayfarer,
Be still my fond interpreter,

Of all the glory that can be
As once on starlit Winchelsea,
Finding upon my pilgrim way
A burning bush for every day.

To My Son

(AGED SIXTEEN)

DEAR boy unborn: the son but of my dream,
Promise of yet unrisen day,
Come, sit beside me; let us talk, and seem
To take such cares and courage for your way,
As some year yet we may.

As some year yet, when you, my son to be,
Look out on life, and turn to go,
And I, grown grey, shall wish you well, and see
Myself imprinted as but she could know
To make amendment so.

I see you then, your sixteen years alight
With limbs all true and golden hair,
And you, unborn, I will, this April night,
Tell of the faith and honour you must wear
For love, whose light you bear.

Beauty you have; as, mothered so, could face
Or limbs or hair be otherwise?

Years gone, dear boy, there was a virgin grace
Worth Homer's laurel under western skies
To wander and devise.

Beauty you have. Cherish it as divine,
Wash it with dews of diligence,
Not vainly, but because it is the sign
Of inward light, the spirit's excellence
Made visible to sense.

Athlete be you; strong runner to the goal,
Glad though the game be lost or won:
Fleet limbs that chronicle a fleeter soul,
In every winter valiantly to run,
Till the last race be done.

Love wisdom that is suited in a rhyme,
And be in all your learning known
Old minstrels chanting out of faded time,
Since he who counts all years gone by alone
Makes any year his own.

And when one day you are a lover too,
Come back to her who bore you, dear,
Tell out your tale; you shall the better woo
For every word that from her lips you hear,
For she made love most clear.

Most clear for him who sits beside you now;
There was a certain frost that fell
Before its time upon a summer bough,—
And how at last that reckoning was well,
She for your love shall tell.

Labour to build your house, but ever keep
That greater garden fresh in mind,
That England with its bird-song buried deep
In cool great woods where chivalry can find
The province of its kind.

Be great or little your inheritance,
Know there shall number in that dower
No treasure from the treasuries of chance
So rare as that you came the perfect flower
Of love's most perfect hour.

Go now, my son. Be all I might have been.
(Ask her. She knows, and none but she.)
Her beauty and her wisdom weathered clean
Some part of me in you, that you might be
Her own eternity.

Interlude

What love is; how I love; how builders' clay
By love is lit into a golden spending;
How love calls beautiful ghosts back to the day;
How life because of love shall have no ending—
These with the dawn I have begun to sing,
These with the million-budded noon that's rising
Shall be a theme, with love's consent, to bring
My song to some imperishable devising.
And may the petals of this garland fall
On every quarrel, and in fragrance bless
Old friendship; and a little comfort all
The weary loves that walk the wilderness,
While still my song I consecrate alone
To her who taking it shall take her own.

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